

Life and Letters  
of  
Edward Young

Henry C. Shelley

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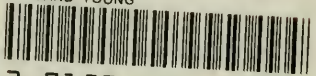
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EDWARD YOUNG



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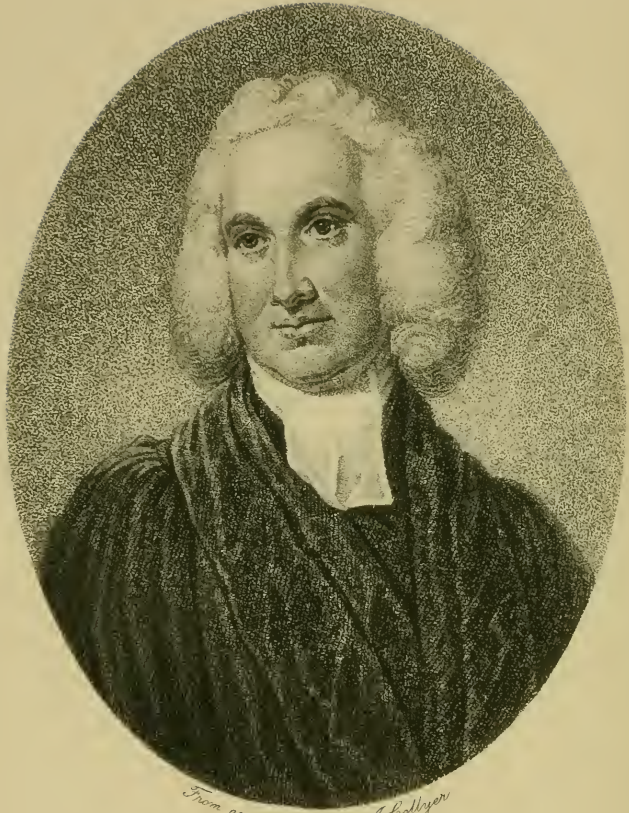




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*From an engraving by J. Collyer*

*Edward Young, D.C.L.*

THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
EDWARD YOUNG





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THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
EDWARD YOUNG

BY  
HENRY C. SHELLEY

AUTHOR OF "THE BRITISH MUSEUM:  
ITS HISTORY AND TREASURES," ETC.

"A man of genius and a poet."  
*Dr. Johnson.*

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## PREFACE

“THERE is room for a new life of Young.” Nearly a century has elapsed since that declaration was made by a contributor to Chalmers’ *Biographical Dictionary*: and the assertion needs no qualification to-day. It is not merely, as that writer observed, that the sketch which was written for Dr. Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* by the Rev. Sir Herbert Croft is “not always candid, nor always perspicuous,” but that adequate materials for a biography of the poet have not been available until recent years.

Much might be urged in corroboration of Croft’s lack of candour and perspicuity, but as the chief offences of that biographer are dealt with in the ensuing pages there is no necessity to recapitulate them here. What has always to be borne in mind is that Croft was a close friend of the poet’s erring son, and that he consequently held a brief for Frederick as against Edward Young. This posthumous misfortune should ensure sympathy for a man who had a full share of that commodity in his lifetime; for, owing to the fact that Croft’s narrative had the distinction of being included with Dr. Johnson’s *Lives*, it set the tone for subsequent writers. Hence, with rare exceptions, Young’s biographers have been almost as unsympathetic as they have been ill-informed.

Perhaps the gravest injustice was perpetrated by George Eliot’s essay about the middle of the last century. Waiving the question as to what right the left-handed wife of G. H. Lewes had to assume the rôle of a censor of conduct, all that needs to be said of that essay is that its severest reflections in the moral sphere were based upon false data or malicious gossip. Isaac Disraeli must be bracketed with the novelist, for he deliberately unearthed from Croft’s manuscript several lying assertions which Dr. Johnson had wisely deleted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. page 258 infra.

Yet it must be admitted that Young's ill fortune in his biographers was partly due to his own action. Twice in his will he appealed to his executors and his housekeeper that all his "manuscript writings whether in books or papers" should be burnt "immediately" on his decease. That wish seems to have been respected, for whereas he must have possessed many letters from his numerous friends, who included Addison and Swift and Cibber and Tickell and Richardson, no fragments of that correspondence are known to exist. Happily, however, many of his own letters had been carefully preserved by their recipients, chief among these being that series addressed to Margaret Duchess of Portland which covered the last twenty-five years of his life. When Sir Leslie Stephen wrote his account of the poet for the *Dictionary of National Biography* those letters had not been discovered, but four years later they were brought to light by the researches of the Historical Manuscripts Commission among the Longleat archives of the Marquis of Bath. Further investigation in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library disclosed such additional unpublished documents as at length made possible the present attempt to provide a long overdue biography of the poet. Doubtless these letters, now first made available for the general reader, will incline many to agree with Lord Jeffrey's verdict that Young was not only as "devout" and as "merry" as Cowper, but "undoubtedly more witty."

Lest it should be regarded as a serious omission that the illustrations do not include a picture of Welwyn Church, it should be explained that that structure has been practically rebuilt since the poet's death. The old Rectory still exists, but as Young did not occupy it, preferring to purchase the house known as the Guessens, it has no associations with his memory. The Guessens, now the residence of W. Down Hoare, Esq., has recently been enlarged, but the pilgrim instinct will derive some satisfaction from the fact that it includes all that survives of the poet's home. The beautiful Avenue in the Rectory grounds was planted by his hands, a fact duly commemorated by the Memorial erected by his

successor ; and for the rest Young's connection with the parish is perpetuated by his educational charity and by the exquisite altar cloth which was the work and the gift of his wife.

Finally, there remains for the author the pleasing duty of expressing his sincere gratitude to the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office for permission to utilise the letters from the manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath ; to his Grace the Duke of Portland, K.G., for the portrait of Margaret Duchess of Portland ; to the Rev. P. M. Wathen, the present Rector of Welwyn ; to Richard W. Goulding, of Welbeck Abbey Library ; to Herbert Craster, sub-librarian of the Bodleian ; and to P. W. Brockwell, of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum.

H. C. S.

*March 29, 1914.*



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# THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF EDWARD YOUNG

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## CHAPTER I

### PARENTAGE AND EDUCATION

1683-1712

WRITING to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the spring of 1829, a topographical Old Mortality unburdened his note-book of various interesting memoranda made during a visit to the Hampshire village of Upham. With his manuscript he forwarded a sketch of the old rectory, the birthplace, as he noted, "of Dr. Young, whose works have placed him in the first rank of genius among our English poets." That drawing, he added, was the more valuable because its model had disappeared, the original building having become ruinous and been replaced by another structure. "The window in the gable," he continued, "was that of the room in which the poet was born. The late elegant scholar and critic, Dr. Joseph Warton, was formerly Rector of Upham, and during his incumbency he caused the event to be commemorated by a tablet suspended in the apartment, and bearing this inscription: *In hoc cubiculo natus erat eximius ille Poeta Edvardus Young, 1681.* This tablet, a twofold relic of departed genius, is still preserved in the new house."

Had the "elegant" Dr. Warton verified his references, he would not have misdated the poet's birth by two years. As he did not become rector of Upham until 1790, he doubtless took his chronology from Sir Herbert Croft's biography,<sup>1</sup> whereas if he had consulted the register of his parish he would have discovered that Edward Young was baptized on the 3rd

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

of July, 1683. That entry does not fix the exact date of the poet's birth; precise accuracy on that point is not obtainable; Young's exclamation may be applied to his own biography—

“ What volumes have been swell'd, what time been spent,  
To fix a hero's birthday, or descent ”;<sup>1</sup>

but, as Sir Leslie Stephen has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> that the poet was born within a short period of his baptism is a safe inference from the fact that the summer of 1683 accords with the statements as to his age made when he was admitted to both Winchester and New College. Croft's error may have been due to Young himself; in his latter years he delighted to harp upon his extreme age, and would not allow that his venerable friend Thomas Newcomb had the advantage of him in seniority.

To fix the poet's descent is a simple matter so far as his male progenitors are concerned. According to Wood, his grandfather was John Young, of Woodhay, Berkshire, “gentleman”;<sup>3</sup> his father, Edward Young, who, born in 1642, was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. But of his grandmother or mother not even the Christian names are known. Nor is there any record of the exact date when the rector of Upham married. One other child was born of the union, a daughter Anne, in favour of whose husband her father resigned his Winchester fellowship. All that is known of this childhood companion of the poet is recorded on her memorial in Winchester Cathedral.<sup>4</sup>

In four particulars there was a remarkable parallelism between the life of the rector of Upham and that of his more famous

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Day*, Book ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>3</sup> *Athenae Oxonienses*.

<sup>4</sup> “ H.S.P. Reliquiae Annae filiae unicae Revdi. Edwardi Young Ecclesiae Salisburiensis nuper Decani Revdi. Johannis Harris Coll. Beatae Mariae prope Winton. Socii charissimae Uxor: Cui non forma corporis nec animi, non aetas immatura, nec matura virtus, non impotentes parvulorum manus, non pia conjugis desideria, ultra vicesimum & nonum aetatis annum vitam superstitem impetrarent. Quo felicitatem (parce dolori) invidendam auspicata est apud Chiddingfold, in com. Surriae, vicesimo tertio die Martii, anno Domini 1713-14.” Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, i, 6.

son. Each reverted to holy orders as an alternative profession ; each was of mature age, the father at least 35 and the son 48, ere he married ; parenthood, too, was a deferred experience for each ; and, finally, it is only for the later years of the two that our information comprises more than mere dates. The latter statement, as will appear hereafter, needs qualification in the case of the poet ; concerning his father's career, however, our knowledge is confined to the last twenty-seven years of his life.

An unsuspected fact in the biography of the elder Young has been brought to light by research among the Ormonde archives of Kilkenny Castle and the Ellis papers in the British Museum.

When William of Orange came to England in the autumn of 1677 to press his suit for the hand of the Princess Mary, one of his closest attendants was the Earl of Ossory, that gallant and high-minded son of the Duke of Ormonde who had married a relative of the Stadholder of Holland. Ossory had already fought by William's side, and there appears to have been a compact between the two that when the Dutch ruler returned to his native land the earl should follow as quickly as possible as general of the English forces in the Netherlands.

In anticipation of that command, Ossory looked around for a suitable chaplain, his choice finally falling on Edward Young, then a Fellow of New College. His decision was communicated in duplicate by his secretary, John Ellis, and Robert Mulys, another servant of the Ormonde family, both addressing their letters to Oxford. The effect of their epistles may be gather from Young's reply to Ellis, dated from Oxford on " Act Sunday."

" Sir,—I came to this town last night and met here with your letter and another from Mr. Mulys writ expressly about my attendance upon my Lord in his expedition, who has been pleased to do me a great honour in that he would prefer me to serve him before others, which I am so really sensible of, that I do not desire to survive the refusal of attending him, whensoever it shall proceed from any consideration of my

own personal ease, advantage, or safety ; but forasmuch as his Lordship has been pleased in great humanity to give me leave to consider the comportment of my outward circumstances, I have concluded to Mr. Mulys that if I can have a fair excuse with a salvo of my credit with my Lord I should choose to decline. For my College requires indispensably my attendance at the Michaelmas audit, the statute having so ordained that they shall not be able to make a lease or set a seal without their complete number of Fellows. But I would not insist on the quitting of my College if the concern only reached myself ; I am obliged to a care that I have not power to lay down, as I have whatever is only my own right. I have a wife and child, whom my absence will necessarily expose to misery and any further miscarriage to beggary, and this is a risk that downright honesty will not suffer me to run without greater necessity. Pray do me the favour to represent me as fair as it comes in your way to excuse me. I shall not desire the favour of any more letters hither, because I fancy I shall come towards London to speak you within a day or two, what Dr. Hammond's venison and friends will not now permit me to write.

“ I am,

“ Your most faithful and affectionate Servant,

“ E. YOUNG.”<sup>1</sup>

From this letter it is clear that Young was not residing at his College ; like other uxorious Fellows, he had established his home elsewhere that the fact of his marriage might not be flaunted in the face of the authorities and compel them to deprive him of his fellowship. To Ossory, however, he was obliged to divulge his secret, especially in view of the hazardous position he had offered him. But the earl was not disposed to be baulked by the impediment of Young's marriage ; although the details are not on record, it may be assumed that Ossory made himself responsible for the wife and child,

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MSS.* 28894, f. 420.

for when he sailed for Holland in the January of 1678 his elect chaplain bore him company.

That he was fully satisfied with his choice is obvious from his repeated attempts to further Young's fortunes. When, a year later, the two were back in England again, the father of the poet was still retained as chaplain in Ossory's household. Soon after, however, the earl, in obedience to his father's request, began to retrench his expenses, and decided that he must dispense with Young's services as soon as he could provide for him elsewhere. His first thought was that perhaps his father, the Duke of Ormonde, would take him into his service. "I wish," he wrote, "you had Mr. Young, my chaplain, in your family, for he is eminent both for preaching and good living, and not being troublesome. Besides, he is an Oxford man."<sup>1</sup> Ormonde, however, was set upon "retrenchment" as well as his son, impelled thereto by his heavy expenses as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and that fact no doubt fully explains why he did not respond to Ossory's hint.

Yet the earl did not cease his efforts to befriend his chaplain. Learning, in the October of 1679, that Charles II gave his viceroy full liberty to dispense the prelatial patronage of Ireland as he pleased, Ossory made a special plea for his campaigning companion. "In case the diocese of Kilkenny become void," he wrote, "if you have not fixed upon a person already, I presume to recommend Dr. Young, who was my chaplain in Flanders. He is an Oxford man, eminent in preaching and for a good life. I believe you would receive all manner of satisfaction in him, both as to the public and your own content."<sup>2</sup> Three months later he returned to the subject again. "I wish Dr. Young that was with me in Flanders were preferred in Ireland. He is an extraordinary pious man, and an excellent preacher. He is an Oxford man, and very well reputed in the University."<sup>3</sup> But it was not to be.

<sup>1</sup> *Ormonde MSS.* iv, 327.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 219.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, v, <sup>5</sup>/<sub>d</sub>263.

Doubtless Ossory would have persisted in his friendly offices until substantial preferment had been bestowed upon his chaplain, but a little later his brilliant career was cut short by a sudden and untimely death. From his letters to his father, however, emerge the facts that the poet's father was eminent in preaching and scholarship, unobtrusive in his demeanour, and godly in his life.

As the living at Upham was in the gift of the Bishop of Winchester, it may well have been that Young owed his collation to that rectory to a New College friendship. One of the tutors there was Thomas Ken, who in 1665 became chaplain to Bishop Morley. That Ken and Young were intimates is a natural inference from the fact that the latter was chosen to preach the sermon at the former's consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells. But whatever the influence which secured him the Upham living, Young settled there at the end of 1680 or early the following year. And, being now obliged to own himself a married man, shortly thereafter he resigned his fellowship at New College for a similar incumbency in connection with Winchester College. Judging from his letters in the Ellis papers, which are mostly dated from Winton, Young did not neglect his duties as a Wykehamist Fellow, while the emoluments of his office were doubtless a welcome addition to his Upham income.

That he was a brilliant preacher does not rest alone upon the repeated testimony of the Earl of Ossory. James Darling catalogues half-a-dozen of his sermons preached on important occasions,<sup>1</sup> and his collected discourses in two volumes, published in 1702, had a large sale. They were, indeed, still read and admired late in the eighteenth century. "Let those that please"—so declared John Wesley—"be in raptures at the elegant sentences of Massillon and Bourdaloue, but show me any French writer whose eloquence exceeds that of Dean Young." In 1686, owing to the infirmities of Bishop Ward, the rector of Upham, four years after he had been made prebendary of Gillingham in the Sarum diocese, was called

<sup>1</sup> *Cyclopaedia Bibliographica*, ii, 3284-5.



upon to preach a *Concio ad Clerum*, and acquitted himself so admirably that the metropolitan visitant, Bishop Sprat, expressed his regret that such a learned divine had the poorest prebend in the Church. The hint was taken, for in 1688 Young was collated to the more lucrative prebend of Combe.<sup>1</sup>

For further preferment he had to wait more than fourteen years, though in the interval he was appointed one of the chaplains to William and Mary. It is in the latter capacity he figures once more among the correspondents of John Ellis, who at the date of the letters to be now quoted had become Under-Secretary of State. Two of these letters, both addressed from Winton, were written on the same day, namely, the 16th of March, 1700. The second epistle explains why it followed so speedily upon the first, but it may be necessary to premise that the Sir John Stanley referred to was secretary to the Lord Chamberlain, and consequently a person of influence in all matters relating to the arrangements of the royal household.

“Sir,—The fate of your friendship to me is to receive the trouble of all my occasions. I have now a desire to be informed either what you know, or what you guess, of the King’s disposing of his time the last fortnight in April; for that is the time of my waiting, and if his Majesty goes to Newmarket I must apply to Sir John Stanley for the favour he granted me last year, namely, to substitute Mr. Fisher (of that place) or some other to wait for me. Otherwise, if he stays about London, I must think of coming up. Pray give me a line and pardon

“Your affectionate humble Servant,

“E. YOUNG.”<sup>2</sup>

“Sir,—I writ another letter to you by this post, at which time I had no notice of the King’s going to Newmarket, but since I have met with one that tells me he goes thither upon

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Jones, *Fasti Ecclesiae Sarisberiensis*, ii, 377.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28883, f. 395.

Tuesday, and another that tells me he goes upon Thursday in Easter week, so that I think it may be most for my ease to take the former part of the month, if so be Sir John Stanley will grant the favour of his letter to substitute one at Newmarket in my stead; and provided likewise I can procure any one upon the place to wait for me the day or two of the month while the King stays in town, which kindness if your brother's leisure can afford me, he may do it better than any I can think of. These requests to them both I humbly recommend to your proposal, and desire your answer, who am,

“ Sir,

“ Your very affectionate humble Servant,

“ E. YOUNG.

“ The reason why I proposed to choose the latter fortnight was because I cannot leave my post here till the Easter offices be over. But now a small pains from your brother, or any other kind man, will be an expedient for that; and as for the Closet-Keeper's fees, I will take care of them, that it be no burden to my substitute at Newmarket.”<sup>1</sup>

Chaplain Young was not the only member of William III's court whose plans were in suspense owing to the uncertainty of that monarch's movements. Sir John Stanley himself had no definite knowledge; so late as the second week in April he wrote: “ The Parliament is up to-day, but I don't yet hear whether the King goes to Newmarket or Hampton Court.”<sup>2</sup> Two days after his letters from Winton the rector of Upham returned home, from whence he again wrote to his obliging friend Ellis.

“ UPHAM, *March 18, 1700.*

“ Sir,—Now my hand is in at begging, pray give me leave to proceed. They say the King intends for Newmarket Tuesday in Easter week, and is expected to return again about

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28883, f. 399

<sup>2</sup> *Buccleuch and Queensberry MSS.* ii, part 2, 647.

Tuesday following; in the interval my waiting begins on Palm Sunday, so that I ought in consequence to be there two days, but for a chaplain to go to Newmarket and have all ask what he makes there (for according to my last year's experience there is no use either of prayers or grace, and the preaching is seized by Cambridge as their privilege) is a pleasure that I would willingly escape, and I fancy you may contrive it for me with as much ease as ask what's a clock.

“ You must be acquainted with Mr. [*sic*] Stanley, and his letter may substitute any one in my stead, and there is one upon the place, Mr. Fisher (I think his name is), a man of worth and repute, rector of that town, who would think it no burden to have that character upon him in my behalf during his Majesty's abode there. Now I pray honour me to Mr. [*sic*] Stanley with the style of your friend and apply to him familiarly for such a letter; ask the little thing as a little thing, for I find that formal applications do usually produce stiff answers; and I need not tell this to you who know the world better. Letters of this kind do customarily bring in a guinea (they did in Mr. Cooling's<sup>1</sup> time); be pleased to engage for me that the fee shall be paid and pardon

“ Sir, your very affectionate humble Servant,

“ E. YOUNG.”<sup>2</sup>

It will be observed that in neither of his letters did Chaplain Young base his reluctance to travel to Newmarket on the perils of the journey thither. Yet Macaulay paints a lurid picture of the hazards undertaken by those who attended William III at the Spring Meeting two years earlier. The peace, he noted, had transformed crowds of old soldiers into highwaymen who infested all the main roads of England. “ Nowhere, however, does the peril seem to have been so great as on the Newmarket road. There, indeed, robbery was organised on a

<sup>1</sup> Richard Cooling, clerk of the Privy Council, who died 19 June, 1697.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28883, f. 405.

scale unparalleled since the days of Robin Hood and Little John.”<sup>1</sup> With such possible dangers, it was hardly worth while for the chaplain to make the long journey from Upham to Newmarket for a couple of days’ waiting. Nor did it become necessary for him to undertake the risk. Whether Sir John or his clerk demanded the guinea does not transpire, but the helpful Ellis procured the necessary letter and saved his friend a wearisome excursion.

Young, indeed, never appealed to him in vain. Whatever were Ellis’s offences against morality, and whether he did or did not deserve to be described as “that epitome of lewdness,” his correspondence shows him to have been both “good-tempered and obliging.” Three letters from Young of the years 1688-99 testify to his unwearied kindness. It appears that a sister of the Upham rector had made herself responsible for the debts of a court messenger’s widow, taking as her security an assignment for £100 which represented the arrears of pay due to the widow’s husband. All her efforts, however, to secure that sum from the Exchequer failed, and it was not until Ellis took the matter in hand that the obligation was discharged.<sup>2</sup>

Ellis, too, seems to have played an important part in securing for Young his last promotion in the Church, for he acted promptly and effectually on the appeal of the following letter.

“WINTON, *February* 16, 1702.

“Sir,—Upon the late disposal of the deaneries of Exeter and Lincoln, a friend was pleased to ask some of the Commissioners why they never thought fit to remember me; it was answered by the Archbishop that they did remember me effectually, and had resolved that if I survived the vacancy of Wells, that should be mine. Salisbury is now void before it, and because I have been reproached by some of themselves for not making application, I beg you to visit my Lord Bradford and let him know I presume to desire his Lordship to drop

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, chap. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28883, ff. 133, 393; 28884, f. 43.

a word in my behalf to the Archbishop and the Bishop of Sarum for that deanery. To prevent this foresaid reproach, and without any other expectation it is I have written the enclosed, which I desire a servant may deliver at St. James's or the Parliament house. Pray give my service to the Dr. Pardon him that is,

“Yours with all affection and respect,

“E. YOUNG.”<sup>1</sup>

This is hardly the letter of a man eager for preferment. The writer was in his sixtieth year and had evidently attained the philosophic calm of mature age. It would seem, indeed, that he was happy and content with his rectory and prebend and Winchester fellowship. He wanted to discount the “reproaches” of his friends, but had little expectation that his application would be successful. Yet successful it was. And that right speedily. For Young's appointment as Dean of Salisbury was dated the 16th of March, 1702, exactly a month subsequent to his request to Ellis.

A year later there is this last letter to that unfailing friend.

“WINTON, *March* 13, 1703.

“My honoured Friend,—I hear her Majesty intends for Newmarket just as my waiting begins. About two years ago when the same journey was intended at the same time Sir John Stanley was so favourable as to offer his letter to Mr. Fisher, vicar of the place, to engage him to ease me. My request is that you would apply to Sir John for the same favour at this time (for my infirmities forbid me to attempt the journey), and you will further oblige,

“Sir,

“Your very humble and affectionate Servant,

“E. YOUNG,

“Dean of Sarum.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28888, f. 68.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 28890, f. 138.

From this request it is clear that Queen Anne had retained Young as one of the royal chaplains, a fact which tends toward the confirmation of the statement that as princess she favoured the rector of Upham by becoming godmother to his son.<sup>1</sup> The letter is of further interest for the correction it supplies of the oft-repeated assertion that Dean Young's death was unexpected. That event took place at Salisbury on the 9th of August, 1705, as is recorded on his memorial in the Cathedral, the inscription of which is attributed to his son.<sup>2</sup>

On the Sunday following Dean Young's demise the pulpit of Salisbury Cathedral was occupied by Bishop Burnet, who began his sermon with this kindly reference to the loss the Chapter had sustained: "Death has been of late walking round us, and making breach upon breach upon us, and has now carried away the head of this body with a stroke, so that he, whom you saw a week ago distributing the holy mysteries is now laid in the dust. But he still lives in the many excellent directions he has left us, both how to live and how to die."<sup>3</sup>

Save for the brief reference to his "wife and child" in the first of his letters to Ellis, quoted above, Dean Young's various epistles to his friend are quite barren of allusion to the family circle in Upham rectory. The child that had been born to him by the autumn of 1677 was his daughter Anne, who had to wait some six years for a companion in the person of her brother Edward. His life from his birth in the summer of 1683 to the commencement of his schooldays, is a complete blank. Notwithstanding the numerous letters of his later years which have been discovered in recent times, our knowledge of his childhood is absolutely nil. Like his father, the poet rarely indulged in personal reminiscences; neither in his

<sup>1</sup> In dedicating *The Last Day* to Queen Anne the poet wrote: "My only title to the great honour I now do myself, is the obligation I have formerly received from your royal indulgence."

<sup>2</sup> "H.S.E./Edvardus Young, LL.B./hujus Ecclesiae Decanus./Vir cum primis/eruditus, probus, integer./Summo utique honore dignissimus/utpote qui de Ecclesia Anglicana/cui fidissimo fuit Praesidio/summoque ornamento/quam optime meruit./Anno Aetatis suae 63./obiit 9 Aug./annoque Domini, 1705."

<sup>3</sup> Croft, in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

familiar correspondence nor in his verse did he ever refer to his early years.

As his father was a Wykehamist and a Fellow of that College, and as Upham was in the Winton diocese and so within the area specially favoured as the recruiting ground of Winchester scholars, it was inevitable that the son of the rector of Upham should be sent to the famous Hampshire school. His name was entered on the election roll in the August of 1694, and the following year he was admitted on the foundation. Whether he made an early or late acquaintance with that *vimen quadrifidum* the personal experience of which is held to be the strict qualification of a Wykehamist, we shall never know; nor are there any data to enlighten us as to whether he heeded those stern legends on the schoolroom wall which have been thus translated: "Either learn; or depart hence; the third choice is to be chastised." As the future poet took seven years over his progression from the Fourth to the Sixth Book, the natural inference is that he was not a precocious pupil. Any effort to imagine his environment from the personalities of the Warden and Head Masters of his time must result in failure, for his two Head Masters are nothing more than names, while of the Warden, John Nicholas, the sole trait that is recorded is that he "loved" authority.

Remembering the intimate connection between Winchester and William of Wykeham's complementary foundation at Oxford, in the natural course of things Young should have proceeded to the University in possession of a New College scholarship. It appears, however, that although his name was on the election roll for New College, he was superannuated before a vacancy occurred.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding that disappointment, however, his father, doubtless in loyalty to his old college, sent his son to New College as a commoner, the date of his matriculation being the 3rd of October, 1702. This choice was also partially determined by the fact that the Warden of that college was a friend of Dean Young, for whose sake, and to save expense, the son was lodged in the Warden's

<sup>1</sup> Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

house. But in less than a year that arrangement was terminated by the Warden's death, whereupon Young was transferred to Corpus Christi College, also on the score of economy. There he remained until 1708, in which year Archbishop Tenison presented him to a law fellowship in All Souls College. This threefold experience inspired that tribute which he paid to the benefactors of learning, the "public fathers of mankind," for whom the Judgment Day had no terrors.

" In that illustrious rank, what shining light  
 With such distinguish'd glory fills my sight ?  
 Bend down, my grateful muse, that homage show,  
 Which to such worthies thou are proud to owe.  
 Wickham ! Fox ! Chichley ! hail, illustrious names,  
 Who to far distant times dispense your beams ;  
 Beneath your shades, and near your crystal springs,  
 I first presum'd to touch the trembling strings."<sup>1</sup>

A couple of dates exhaust our further knowledge of the poet's academic education. Some six years after he obtained his fellowship at All Souls, namely, in April, 1714, he took the degree of B.C.L., and seven years later—in June, 1719—he proceeded to D.C.L. These long intervals convey the impression that Young carried with him to Oxford those leisurely habits of study which seem to have marked his career as a Wykehamist. And the character of the degrees he elected to win makes it obvious that his thoughts had not yet turned towards his father's profession.

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Day*, Book ii.



## CHAPTER II

### COURTIER AND POET

1713-1719

SUCH anecdotes of Young's Oxford days as have been preserved in the literary gossip of the eighteenth century are of a somewhat contradictory nature. According to Croft, who seems to have derived much of his information from the poet's son, rumour asserted that "when first Young found himself independent, and his own master at All Souls, he was not the ornament to religion and morality which he afterwards became."<sup>1</sup> This reads suspiciously like an abbreviated version of the remark made by Pope: "Young had much of a sublime genius, though without common sense; so that his genius, having no guide, was perpetually liable to degenerate into bombast. This made him pass a foolish youth, the sport of peers and poets, but his having a very good heart enabled him to support the clerical character when he first assumed it, first with decency, and afterwards with honour."<sup>2</sup> On the contrary side of the account, however, must be placed that story which Dr. Johnson thought of so much importance. Every time Croft called upon him during the period when he was engaged upon his sketch of Young's life, Johnson always concluded their conversation with the injunction: "Don't forget that rascal Tindal, Sir. Be sure to hang up the atheist." The anecdote was to this effect: "Tindal used to spend much of his time at All Souls. 'The other boys,' said the atheist, 'I can always answer, because I always know whence they have their arguments, which I have read a hundred times; but that fellow Young is continually pestering me with something of his own.'"<sup>3</sup> To discriminate between these stories to

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

<sup>2</sup> Ruffhead, *Life of Pope*, 290.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

the extent of characterising the latter as "perhaps apocryphal,"<sup>1</sup> does not seem judicial; if we accept Pope's "foolish youth" and "the sport of peers and poets," we should also give Young credit for his apologetics.

Another and more picturesque legend is concerned with his literary habits. Dr. Ridley, a Wykehamist who was almost a contemporary of the poet at Oxford, handed down a report current in his time to the effect that "when Young was composing, he would shut up his windows, and sit by a lamp even at mid-day, nay, that skulls, bones, and instruments of death were among the ornaments of his study." Here, again, we have to deal with an anecdote which looks like a variant of another story recorded by Spence, to the effect that when Young was engaged upon one of his tragedies, the Duke of Wharton sent him a skull with a candle fixed therein as the most appropriate lamp for him to write tragedy by. That there was some foundation for Dr. Ridley's story is obvious from the poet's own confession that he never composed but at night, except on rare occasion when on horseback.

Exactly what Pope meant by saying Young was "the sport of peers and poets" is not quite clear; if, however, "friend" is substituted for "sport" the assertion may be accepted, plus a greater emphasis upon poets than upon peers. For there are proofs enough that Young's chosen companions in his Oxford days were youths who, like himself, were addicted to the poetic muse. Three of those companions were destined for more or less distinguished careers. In the case of George Bubb, better known as the Bubb Dodington who became Lord Melcombe, some doubt has been entertained as to whether he was ever at Oxford, notwithstanding the fact that in one of the latest exercises of his muse he hailed Young as "kind companion of my youth." All uncertainty on that score, however, is removed by one of Thomas Tickell's letters, in which he referred to the acquaintance which he had the "good fortune and honour" to have with him "in the University."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness*.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Egerton MS.* 2174, f. 310.

As Dodington was not born until 1691, and as he had begun a diplomatic career by 1715, it is obvious that his sojourn at Oxford must have been brief. Of longer duration, however, was Young's university companionship with Thomas Tickell and William Harrison, the first of whom preceded him at Oxford by nearly eighteen months. Tickell gave early manifestation of his poetic bent, greatly to the disgust of the querulous Thomas Hearne, who regarded him as "a vain conceited coxcomb" and a mere "pretender to poetry." As those epithets were hidden in the diary of the acrimonious antiquary, they neither disturbed Tickell's peace of mind nor mitigated his confidence in his poetic gifts. That the latter was securely based is a natural inference from his rushing into print with his *Oxford* in his twentieth year after five years' sojourn at the University. Apart from its glowing references to Lord Lonsdale, which were sadly wasted owing to that peer's untimely demise ere he could discharge his debt to the poet, and that tribute to Addison which was the forerunner of other and more profitable incense offered at the same shrine, the chief interest of the poem to-day consists in its description of the poetic clique of which Young was a member—

" Me Fortune and kind Heaven's indulgent care  
To famous Oxford and the Muses bear,  
Where, of all ranks, the blooming youths combine  
To pay due homage to the mighty Nine,  
And snatch, with smiling joy, the laurel crown,  
Due to the learned honours of the gown.  
Here I, the meanest of the tuneful throng,  
Delude the time with an unhallow'd song,  
Which thus my thanks to much-lov'd Oxford pays,  
In no ungrateful, though unartful lays."<sup>1</sup>

Despite his modesty in describing himself as "the meanest of the throng," Tickell's gifts so commended themselves to the authorities that in 1711 he was appointed temporary professor of poetry, an honour which hall-marked him as the leader of the "blooming youths" who had consecrated themselves to the "mighty Nine." More than a year prior to that

<sup>1</sup> Chalmer's, *English Poets*, xi, 131.

event, however, the tuneful band had been depleted of one of its members through the departure to London of William Harrison. He was an earlier friend of Young than Tickell, for the two had been contemporaries at Winchester, Harrison having been admitted there as a scholar in 1698. Two years subsequent to his removal to Oxford, Harrison emulated Tickell by appearing in print with his *Woodstock Park*, a poem in praise of the Duke of Marlborough, which, like Tickell's *Oxford*, contained a flattering reference to Addison's poetic gifts.

That these three—Young and Tickell and Harrison—formed a little coterie of their own and were attached to each other by genuine affection, is beyond dispute. Tickell described Harrison as the “much-lov'd youth,” and Young characterised him as “the partner of my soul,” while the relations between Young and Tickell may be inferred from the exordium of the poem addressed to the latter by the former on the occasion of Addison's death—

“O, long with me in Oxford groves confin'd,  
 In social arts and sacred friendship join'd ;  
 Fair Isis' sorrow, and fair Isis' boast,  
 Lost from her side, but fortunately lost ;  
 Thy wonted aid, my dear companion ! bring,  
 And teach me thy departed friend to sing.”<sup>1</sup>

If there was any distinction between Young's friendships with Tickell and Harrison it may have been that in the case of the former it was literary and in that of the latter, personal. Such an inference might be drawn not only from the warmth and tenderness of Young's tribute to Harrison in his *Epistle to Lord Lansdowne*, but from the appeal in the lines quoted above. That request for Tickell's “wonted aid” in poetical composition does not stand alone ; in Pope's version of his quarrel with Addison, as recorded by Spence, Young is cited as stating that “he and Tickell were so intimately acquainted at Oxford that each used to communicate to the other whatever

<sup>1</sup> *A letter to Mr. Tickell, occasioned by the death of the Right Hon. Joseph Addison.*

verses they wrote, even to the least things." No evidence of this literary comradeship is visible in Young's encomium of Harrison; the predominant note there is personal affection. Of course, some of this may have been due to the untimeliness and pathos of Harrison's death. By the autumn of 1710 he was in London, and well established in the good graces of so influential a friend as Swift. An introduction to St. John followed, the upshot of which was his employment on the embassy which concluded the treaty of Utrecht. On his return to England in January, 1713, with the barrier treaty, he was taken suddenly ill with inflammation on the lungs, to which he succumbed on the 14th of February. Swift proved himself a kind-hearted friend at that moment of need, speedily procuring money to relieve his immediate necessities; and Young hurried from Oxford to his death-bed. He was even then engaged upon his first-published poem, the *Epistle to Lord Lansdowne*, and when he came to complete his lines he could not resist contrasting his lot with that of the peer he was addressing—

“ How are you bless'd in such a matchless friend !  
 Alas ! with me the joys of friendship end ;  
 O, Harrison ! I must, I will complain ;  
 Tears soothe the soul's distress, tho' shed in vain ;  
 Didst thou return, and bless thy native shore  
 With welcome peace, and is my friend no more ?  
 Thy task was early done, and I must own  
 Death kind to thee, but ah ! to thee alone.  
 But 'tis in me a vanity to mourn,  
 The sorrows of the great thy tomb adorn ;  
 Strafford and Bolinbroke the loss perceive,  
 They grieve, and make thee envied in thy grave.  
 With aching heart, and a foreboding mind,  
 I night to day in painful journey join'd,  
 When first inform'd of his approaching fate ;  
 But reach'd the partner of my soul too late.  
 'Twas past : his cheek was cold ; that tuneful tongue  
 Which Isis charm'd with its melodious song,  
 Now languish'd, wanted strength to speak his pain,  
 Scarce raised a feeble groan, and sank again.

Each art of life in which he bore a part,  
 Shot like an arrow through my bleeding heart.  
 To what serv'd all his promis'd wealth and power,  
 But more to load that most unhappy hour ?

Yet still prevail'd the greatness of his mind ;  
 That, not in health, or life itself confin'd,  
 Felt through his mortal pangs Britannia's peace,  
 Mounted to joy, and smil'd in death's embrace.

His spirit now just ready to resign,  
 No longer now his own, no longer mine,  
 He grasps my hand, his swimming eyeballs roll,  
 My hand he grasps, and enters in my soul :  
 Then with a groan—Support me ! O, beware  
 Of holding worth, however great, too dear ! ”

Such was the end of Young's first friendship, and the early loss of so beloved a companion may help to explain the sober hue of so much of his verse. By following that friendship to its sad conclusion, however, Young's earliest poem has been anticipated and his Oxford associations lost sight of for the moment. It is necessary to go back a few years.

Owing to the death of his father in 1705, the poet found himself in his twenty-third year free to indulge his own preference in the choice of a profession. The nature of the fellowship which he obtained in 1708 and the character of the degrees he acquired, would suggest that his bent was towards the law, but the peculiar conditions which prevailed at All Souls in the first quarter of the eighteenth century should deter one from a hasty conclusion. The Warden of the college in Young's days was Bernard Gardiner, whose tenure of office was one protracted struggle against that lax interpretation of the founder's statutes which had led to many abuses. One of these was non-residence, which, as Montagu Burrows remarks, was gradually carrying off the most competent of the Fellows and depriving the University and the college alike of their services. “The younger residents betrayed the want of a constant steadying power ; and the learning of the society was suffering in consequence. Above all, the clerical element was gradually disappearing ; and under various pretexts the college was becoming a sort of thinly-inhabited club, the

occasional resort of non-resident laymen.”<sup>1</sup> Young had been a Fellow two years when the Warden’s efforts at reform brought Archbishop Tenison on the scene for a Visitation, the outcome of which was that the non-residence of the Fellows was recognised as quite permissible.

Yet the poet does not seem to have availed himself unduly of that newly-established privilege. Indeed, until he settled at Welwyn in the summer of 1730, he does not appear to have had any other home than his chambers at All Souls. Whenever he appended an address to his poems, it was that of his college, a practice which he tacitly observed in the second of his *Two Epistles to Mr. Pope*, which is inscribed as written “From Oxford” in 1730.

Whatever may have been the earliest inspiration of his muse, it was a political occasion which first decided him to venture into print. That fact is of supreme significance in the biography of the poet; he began to publish at a time when literary effusions were regarded as the surest passport to preferment in the State and Church; and although his life was protracted to a great age, he was never able to quite disabuse himself of the idea which possessed him at the outset of his career.

During the first decade of the eighteenth century, literature was regarded as “a political instrument.” As Sir Leslie Stephen remarked, “the relation between the political and the literary class was at this time closer than it had ever been. The alliance between them marks, in fact, a most conspicuous characteristic of the time. It was the one period, as authors repeat with a fond regret, in which literary merit was recognised by the distributors of State patronage.”<sup>2</sup> Many names will occur to the student of literature in support of this view, such as those of Addison, Steele, Gay, Tickell, and Prior. And, naturally, the poetical as well as the literary world was divided into two hostile camps. When Young first became an author the Whig ascendancy was on the wane. In other

<sup>1</sup> *Worthies of All Souls*, 352.

<sup>2</sup> *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 35, 36.

words, the fierce struggle between the adherents and opponents of the War of the Spanish Succession was ending in favour of the latter. Swift had prepared the way by his *Excellent New Song*, by his trenchant *Examiner* paper, and *The Conduct of the Allies*, and the good work had been helped along by Tickell's address to the Bishop of Bristol *On the Prospect of Peace*. The last-named poem was obviously written at Oxford—

“ My artless reed attempts this lofty theme,  
Where sacred Isis rolls her ancient stream—”

and it is doing no violence to probability to assume that that eulogium of the Tory policy of peace was thoroughly discussed by Young and its author.

And when Queen Anne was persuaded to that final *coup de main* which created sufficient new peers to out-vote the Whig majority in the House of Lords, Young was fired with an ambition to participate in the probable spoils of the fray. If Addison had reaped the sweets of office by his *The Campaign* in praise of Marlborough and the War, why should not he obtain a like reward by a panegyric on one of the new peers and the Peace?

Such was the occasion, then, and such the probable motive of Young's first-published poem, *An Epistle to the Right Hon. George Lord Lansdowne*, which was given to the world early in 1713. The verses had a dual object, namely, to commend both the peer and the policy he supported. Pope lent his aid to the latter service by the apostrophe to Peace which he added to his *Windsor Forest*, yet it may be questioned whether his pastoral metaphors were as efficacious in influencing popular opinion as Young's more realistic description of the benefits accruing from the re-established amity of the nations.

“ The bravest of mankind shall now have leave  
To die but once, nor piece-meal seek the grave :  
On gain or pleasure bent, we shall not meet  
Sad melancholy numbers in each street  
(Owners of bones dispers'd on Flandria's plain,  
Or wasting in the bottom of the main) ;



To turn us back from joy, in tender fear,  
 Lest it an insult of their woes appear,  
 And make us grudge ourselves that wealth, their blood,  
 Perhaps preserv'd, who starve, or beg for food.  
 Devotion shall run pure, and disengage  
 From that strange fate of mixing peace with rage.  
 On heaven without a sin we now may call,  
 And guiltless to our Maker prostrate fall ;  
 Be Christians while we pray, nor in one breath  
 Ask mercy for ourselves, for others death."

But, as became the poet who was not yet an official theologian, that sympathetic vein quickly gave place to delight in the reflection that the establishment of Peace ensured the restoration of the arts. And by the "arts restor'd" Young was not thinking of painting or sculpture or music ; no, the muse was uppermost in his thoughts because it was his patron's "care above the rest." Nor did he fail to make a choice within a choice. In his earlier years Lord Lansdowne had won applause by several plays, a fact which explains why Young declared that of all the "thousand various forms" of the muse she

"Shines in none with more majestic mien  
 Than when in state she draws the purple scene."

That the poet should have described Lansdowne as the only descendant of Shakespeare has been gently ridiculed by one of his critics, who probably forgot that Dryden bequeathed his laurels to the peer and compared him with Homer. His plays achieved phenomenal success, while even his poems deserve higher praise than Dr. Johnson's oft-quoted plagiarism from Horace Walpole.

Whatever the measure of his guilt in flattery, which Pope must share with him, much may be forgiven Young for his admirable criticism of the French and British drama, a criticism and a comparison which proves he had devoted much study to the subject—

"Our foes confess, nor we the praise refuse,  
 The drama glories in the British muse.  
 The French are delicate, and nicely lead  
 Of close intrigue the labyrinthian thread ;

Our genius more affects the grand, than fine,  
 Our strength can make the great plain action shine :  
 They raise a great curiosity indeed,  
 From his dark maze to see the hero freed ;  
 We rouse the affections, and that hero show  
 Gasping beneath some formidable blow :  
 They sigh ; we weep : the Gallic doubt and care,  
 We heighten into terror and despair ;  
 Strike home, the strongest passions boldly touch,  
 Nor fear our audience should be pleas'd too much.  
 What's great in Nature we can greatly draw,  
 Nor thank for beauties the dramatic law.  
 The fate of Caesar is a tale too plain  
 The fickle Gallic taste to entertain ;  
 Their art would have perplex'd, and interwove  
 The golden arras with gay flowers of love :  
 We know heaven made him a far greater man  
 Than any Caesar in a human plan ;  
 And such we draw him, nor are too refined  
 To stand affected with what heaven designed.  
 To claim attention, and the heart invade,  
 Shakespeare but wrote the play, th' Almighty made.  
 'Tis great Corneille at every scene we praise ;  
 On Nature's surer aid Britannia calls,  
 None think of Shakespeare till the curtain falls ;  
 Then, with a sigh, returns our audience home,  
 From Venice, Egypt, Persia, Greece, or Rome."

Not content with his eulogy of Lansdowne as a dramatist, the poet also lauded his varied learning, his unselfish nature, his patronage of literature, and his infinite resources should he elect to exchange the cares of the State for a retired country life. The *Epistle*, indeed, is such that, despite its assertion that "the muses write for glory, not for gold," there is no resisting the conclusion that it was a bold bid for preferment of some kind. But Young had been as unfortunate in his choice of his first patron as his friend Tickell. However disposed Lansdowne may have been to reward his eulogist with a Government sinecure, his tenure of office came to a sudden end before he had done anything ; and to supply the omission from his own resources was beyond his power. He was, in fact, perhaps the most impecunious patron the

poet could have selected. On the eve of his creation as a peer he was so heavily in debt that he was obliged to appeal to the Earl of Oxford for the reimbursement of some of the money he had expended on the late elections.<sup>1</sup> So Young was taken at his word, and had to be satisfied with glory in lieu of gold.

Tickell's second attempt to achieve preferment by poetry had a result which taught Young a lesson. It is true that the address to the Bishop of Bristol *On the Prospect of Peace* did not procure Tickell any immediate benefit of a substantial kind, but it arrested the attention of Addison, who, in the *Spectator*, hailed the "rising genius" of its author and expressed the wish that he might be rewarded for so "noble a performance." Tickell hastened to improve his advantage by a laudatory poem *To the supposed Author of the Spectator*, an effort which won him the regard of Steele as well as Addison. These compliments were exchanged in the late months of 1712; in the April of the following year the performance and great success of Addison's *Cato* afforded Tickell another opportunity to deepen his connection with one who at any time might be in a position to advance his interests. Hence Tickell's appearance among those poets who addressed such eulogistic *Verses to the Author of the Tragedy of Cato*. Young, too, was among the number, inspired, no doubt, by the good success of his friend. His lines, addressed from "All Souls College, Oxon," were but few in number, but they would serve to strengthen that link between himself and Addison which had already been forged by Tickell's association with the dramatist.

From this period must be dated Young's connection with the "Wits" of London town. Not that he abandoned Oxford as his headquarters: it has been noted above that he retained his chambers at All Souls until he entered the Church; but that from 1713 onwards he made frequent visits to the capital that he might enjoy the literary society which was centralised there. Those were the years of Addison's "little senate" at Button's coffee-house, the late meetings and copious libations of which were too heavy a tax on Pope's fragile constitution.

<sup>1</sup> *Portland MSS.* v, 134.

Steele was of the company, of course, and Carey, and Budgell, and Tickell; and it was probably by the latter that Young was introduced to that social circle. In Spence's "Anecdotes" are several of the poet's reminiscences which were coloured by his experiences at Button's, one being his famous tribute to Addison's conversational powers. "He was rather mute in society on some occasions," Young said; "but when he began to be company, he was full of vivacity, and went on in a noble stream of thought and language, so as to chain the attention of every one to him." Young, indeed, seems to have been more captivated by Addison than by any other light of the Augustan era; it is to him, as will be recalled later, that we owe the most affecting anecdote of the great essayist, while in his extreme old age he still retained a vivid recollection of much of his conversation. "More than once," he wrote in his seventy-fourth year, "I have heard the famous Mr. Addison say that it was his wish—if it so pleased God—to die in the summer, because then, walking abroad, he frequently contemplated the works of God, which gave such a serious turn and awful composure to the mind as best qualified it to enter the Divine presence."<sup>1</sup>

Altogether Young doubtless regarded himself as amply rewarded for his praise of *Cato*; it had helped to secure him admission to the inner circle at Button's, and soon had another issue in obtaining for his next poem a preliminary puff in the pages of Steele's *Guardian*. As the author of the issue of that little sheet for the 9th of May, 1713, has not been identified, the cynic may be inclined to believe that on that occasion the easy-going Steele allowed the poet to blow his own heralding trumpet. Whatever were the facts, the *Guardian* of that date contained a fervid eulogy of sacred poetry. While other poetry, the writer remarked, led its readers through meadows and gardens, and dazzled with crowns and sceptres, "sacred numbers seem to admit us into a solemn and magnificent temple, they encircle us with everything that is holy and divine, they superadd an agreeable awe and reverence

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 325.

to all those pleasing emotions we feel from other lays," etc., etc.; the chief purpose of this exordium being to prepare the way for several quotations from a manuscript poem which would "shortly appear in public," the title of which was *The Last Day*.

If that literary ground-bait had the effect of quickening appetite, the long delay in the appearance of the full feast must surely have tended to replace hunger by indifference, *The Last Day* not having been licensed until the May of 1714. This was the second of Young's considerable poems, and was dedicated to Queen Anne by a lengthy epistle in prose. Several of the poet's critics have rebuked him severely for the fulsome character of that and other of his dedications, which do certainly offend modern taste by their unrestrained adulation. Two extenuations may be urged on his behalf. When he issued his works in a collected edition he eliminated the dedications, not regarding them as the "excusable" products of his pen. And, further, in offering such generous incense to probable patrons he was merely following the fashion of the day. It would be as grave a mistake to regard Young's dedications too seriously as to imagine the Elizabethans were sincere in their blandishments of the Virgin Queen.

Although there are in *The Last Day* numerous passages of marked beauty, as a whole the poem suffers from that diffuseness which Young afterwards recognised as a defect. If he had applied his own rule of preferring "four lines to six," his treatment of this solemn theme would have gained immensely in dramatic effect. The three books into which the poem is divided are concerned respectively with a survey of the world and the firmament, the resurrection and the setting of the judgment scene, and the descent of the Judge and the final catastrophe. The anticipation in the first book of the inevitable climax is surely one of those "noble" paragraphs which won Johnson's approval—

"Thick clouds of darkness shall arise on day;  
In sudden night all earth's dominions lay;

Impetuous winds the scatter'd forests rend ;  
 Eternal mountains, like their cedars, bend ;  
 The valleys yawn, the troubled ocean roar,  
 And break the bondage of his wonted shore ;  
 A sanguine stain the silver moon o'erspread ;  
 Darkness the circle of the sun invade ;  
 From inmost heaven incessant thunders roll,  
 And the strong echo bound from pole to pole."

Remembering the eschatology of the eighteenth century, it is not surprising that for the reader of the twentieth century Young's realistic treatment of the resurrection is fatal for complete poetic enjoyment. He labours the literalism of re-assembled bones to a point which must now seem ludicrous, yet in the midst of this there is a moving passage descriptive of the awakening of the dead in Westminster Abbey—

" That ancient, sacred, and illustrious dome,  
 Where soon or late fair Albion's heroes come,  
 From camps, and courts, tho' great, or wise, or just,  
 To feed the worm, and moulder into dust ;  
 That solemn mansion of the royal dead,  
 Where passing slaves o'er sleeping monarchs tread,  
 Now populous o'erflows : a numerous race  
 Of rising kings fill all th' extended space :  
 A life well spent, not the victorious sword,  
 Awards the crown, and styles the greater lord."

Still more dramatic is the passage in which metaphor is heaped upon metaphor to impress the reader with the overwhelming multitude which will be assembled before the Judge's throne at the last awful assize, though even in that Young could not stay his pen from interjecting a parenthesis which weakens the effect at which he aimed.

" How vast the concourse ! not in number more  
 The waves that break on the resounding shore,  
 The leaves that tremble in the shady grove,  
 The lamps that gild the spangled vaults above :  
 Those overwhelming armies, whose command  
 Said to one empire, fall ; another, stand :  
 Whose rear lay wrapt in night, while breaking dawn  
 Rous'd the broad front, and call'd the battle on :

Great Xerxes' world in arms, proud Cannae's field,  
 Where Carthage taught victorious Rome to yield,  
 (Another blow had broke the fates' decree,  
 And earth had wanted her fourth monarchy)  
 Immortal Blenheim, fam'd Ramillia's host,  
 They all are here, and here they all are lost :  
 Their millions swell to be discerned in vain,  
 Lost as a billow in th' bounding main."

One other passage must be quoted, that apostrophe to Christ which foreshadows the preacher in the "Wit." It is noteworthy, indeed, that the bulk of Young's early poetry was consonant with the sacred profession he was to assume.

" Triumphant King of Glory ! Soul of bliss !  
 What a stupendous turn of fate is this !  
 O ! whither art thou rais'd above the scorn  
 And indigence of him in Bethlem born ;  
 A needless, helpless, unaccounted guest,  
 And but a second to the fodder'd beast !  
 How changed from Him who, meekly prostrate laid,  
 Vouchsaf'd to wash the feet Himself had made !  
 From Him who was betray'd, forsook, denied,  
 Wept, languish'd, pray'd, bled, thirsted, groan'd and died ;  
 Hung, pierced and bare, insulted by the foe,  
 All heaven in tears above, earth unconcern'd below ! "

It is to be feared that Queen Anne's "royal leisure" did not avail her to "turn over the sheets" of *The Last Day*. For once more Young had been unfortunate in his choice of a patron, the Queen dying some two months after the publication of his poem, leaving him with the recompense of glory instead of gold or preferment.

Nor was he any luckier with his third attempt. If we may accept his own statement, he had no difficulty in deciding to whom he should inscribe *The Force of Religion ; or Vanquished Love*, a poem in two books of which the tragedy of Lady Jane Grey was the central theme, for in the dedication to the Countess of Salisbury he affirmed that the nature of his subject pointed out his patroness, and scarcely left him the liberty of a

choice. The inevitableness of that selection is hardly so obvious to the modern reader. All that he can learn of the Lady Jane's eighteenth century apograph in "virtue and beauty" is that she was the second daughter of the Earl of Thanet, and that at the date of the poem—1714—she was in her twenty-first year and had married five years earlier James Cecil, fifth Earl of Salisbury. The latter fact may provide the clue to the dedication, for that young noble had been educated at Oxford, and hence was probably one of the peers of whom Young, in Pope's phrase, was "the sport." Although the poet implies, in his address to the countess, that he had seen Lady Salisbury in her "closet of devotion," and dwells with becoming fervour upon the unrivalled loveliness of that vision, there is no evidence to show that this was more than poetic licence.

Of the poem itself the chief defect is that it postulates in the Lady Jane a far deeper passion for her husband than history warrants, though Young would probably have excused that liberty on the plea that it was taken to heighten the picture of the young queen's religious fortitude. The main theme is the struggle between earthly and heavenly love, and if, as Johnson objected, the nine days' Queen was made "too heroic to be pitied," the piece is redeemed from total failure by many happy lines. Such, for example, is the couplet which describes the Lady Jane as one

"Who gain'd a crown by treason not her own,  
And innocently fill'd another's throne,"

while, granting the poet's reading of history, how tersely the young wife is made to express her affection—

"I lately was a queen ; I still am so  
While Guilford's wife."

Nor is the poem lacking in those felicitous metaphors which came so readily from Young's pen.

"As trembling flames now take a feeble flight,  
Now catch the brand with a returning light,"



is a happy illustration of how the young wife's affection hovered between sacred and profane love, and equally graceful is the figure used to depict her collapse on learning that she and her husband were doomed beyond hope—

“ Thus the fair lily, when the sky's o'ercast,  
At first but shudders in the feeble blast ;  
But when the winds and weighty rains descend,  
The fair and upright stem is forc'd to bend ;  
Till broke at length, its snowy leaves are shed,  
And strew with dying sweets their native bed.”

If Young anticipated that this poetic present to the Countess of Salisbury might move her husband to secure him some lucrative office, he was woefully disappointed. Whatever the promise of his youth, the fifth Earl of Salisbury took no commanding place in the counsels of his nation and died at an early age without adding any lustre to the name of Cecil. For his next patron, then, the poet made choice of Addison, the occasion of his verse—the death of Queen Anne—probably suggesting that the “ Secretary to their Excellencies the Lords Justices ” might soon be in a position to advance his interests. Of all the early poems of Young that entitled *On the Late Queen's Death* is perhaps the most distasteful owing to its fulsome flattery of Anne and its obsequious reference to the first of the Georges. Perhaps the poet would have spared his epithets of “ great stranger ” and “ great sir,” and his assertion that “ the crown's impatient to enclose thy head,” had he known that the Elector of Hanover could neither speak nor read a word of English! Yet even in this sycophantic production there is a picturesque illustration of the vanity of human glory.

“ So when with idle skill the wanton boy  
Breathes through his tube, he sees, with eager joy,  
The trembling bubble, in its rising small ;  
And by degrees expands the glittering ball.  
But when, to full perfection blown, it flies  
High in the air, and shines in various dyes,  
The little monarch, with a falling tear,  
Sees his world burst at once, and disappear.”

Between the date of that poem and that of his next publication, Young allowed five years to elapse, a period of which our knowledge is scanty. Here, then, is a hiatus into which the credulous may introduce that legend which sends the poet abroad to wander absent-mindedly on to a battlefield while absorbed in reading a volume of the classics, with the result that he was hard put to it to demonstrate that he was not a spy but merely an abstracted poet. In one of his later poems Young certainly does imply that he had had personal vision of a battlefield, but where and when he achieved that experience are unsolved problems. That he was absent-minded is well established: perhaps some inventive "Wit" of the day blended that fact with his own fancy plus Young's lines and evolved the legend noted above.

It is more to the purpose to observe that from the end of 1714 onward he strengthened his connections with the literary and political leaders in London by frequent visits to the capital. Steele enlisted him as a contributor to the *Guardian*, and that by the summer of 1715 he was familiar with Pope is obvious from the fact that he is one of the minor characters in the serio-comedy of that poet's famous quarrel with Addison. Pope, it will be remembered, had requested the essayist to read and give him the "benefit of his observation" on his translation of the first two books of the *Iliad*, a friendly service which Addison declined to render in connection with the version of the first book because Tickell, his intimate companion, had already completed and submitted to him his translation of that section of the *Iliad*. He would, however, and did, read and proffer his "observations" on Pope's version of the second book. Up to that point Homer's translator had no cause for complaint; he fully recognised that Tickell had as much right to translate any author as he himself. Pope may be allowed to tell the sequel in his own words as recorded in the "Anecdotes" of Spence. "Soon after it was generally known that Mr. Tickell was publishing the first book of the *Iliad* I met Dr. Young in the street, and upon our falling into that subject, the doctor expressed a great

deal of surprise at Tickell's having such a translation by him so long. He said that it was inconceivable to him, and that there must be some mistake in the matter ; that he and Tickell were so intimately acquainted at Oxford that each used to communicate to the other whatever verses they wrote, even to the least things ; that Tickell could not have been busied in so long a work there without his knowing something of the matter, and that he had never heard a single word of it till on this occasion."

Whereupon Pope grew suspicious. And eventually his suspicion took the definite form of believing that on it becoming known that he was at work on the *Iliad* Addison had urged Tickell to begin and hurry through a rival translation. The dispute is of no moment to these pages save in so far as Young was implicated in it, and it so happens that the earliest of his letters that has been saved from destruction is addressed to Tickell from Oxford in connection with this matter.

" June 28, 1715.

" Dear Tickell,—Be assured I want no new inducement to behave myself like your friend. To be very plain, the University almost in general gives the preference to Pope's translation ; they say his is written with more spirit, ornament and freedom, and has more the air of an original. I inclined some, Hanton, etc., to compare the translation with the original ; which was done, and it made some small alterations in their opinions, but still Pope was their man. The bottom of the case is this, they were strongly prepossessed in Pope's favour, from a wrong notion of your design before the poem came down ; and the sight of yours has not force enough upon them to make them willing to contradict themselves, and own they were in the wrong ; but they go far for prejudiced persons, and own yours is an excellent translation, nor do I hear any violently affirm it to be worse than Pope's, but those who look on Pope as a miracle, and among those to your comfort Evans is the first, and even these zealots allow that you have outdone Pope in some particulars.

“ Upon the whole I affirm the performance has gained you much reputation, and when they compare you with what they should compare you, with Homer only, you are much admired. It has given I know many of the best judges a desire to see the *Odyssey* by the same hand, which they talk of with pleasure, and I seriously believe your first piece of that will quite break their partiality for Pope, which your *Iliad* has weakened, and secure your success. Nor think my opinion groundlessly swayed by my wishes, for I observe, as prejudice cools, you grow in favour, and you are a better poet now than when your Homer first came down. I am persuaded fully that your design cannot but succeed here, and it shall be my hearty desire and endeavour that it may.

“ Dear Tickell, yours most affectionately,

“ E. YOUNG.

“ My humble service to Mr. Addison and Sir Rich<sup>d</sup> [Steele].”<sup>1</sup>

Another year elapses ere the poet emerges to view again. This time it is in the capacity of a Latin orator, the occasion being the laying of the foundation stone of the Codrington Library. More than six years had passed since Christopher Codrington, a Fellow of All Souls, had died in far away Barbadoes, bequeathing to his old college some 12,000 books and £10,000 in cash wherewith to erect and endow a library for their reception. By the early summer of 1716 everything was ready for laying the foundation stone of that building, and the occasion was rendered additionally notable by the removal of Codrington's body for re-interment in the Chapel of All Souls. For this dual ceremony two orators were elected, Digby Cotes being called upon to pronounce the eulogy over the grave and Young to speak the oration at the laying of the foundation stone on the following day. When these two addresses were published, Young prefaced his by an English

<sup>1</sup> Aiken, *Life of Joseph Addison*, ii, 130-1, where the letter is wrongly stated to have been written from London.

epistle to "The Ladies of the Codrington Family" who had been present at the stone-laying, in which he declared that his object was to "hide the slenderness of the performance" by throwing over it "something like a hoop-petticoat." As the ladies were not supposed to understand Latin, he compared them to the "fair Sabines, caught at a solemnity" to which they were invited and "detained in Roman districts" without their consent. The epistle dedicatory was indeed as unconventional as the Latin oration, with many quips at the "fine gentlemen" who would be snared by it into pretending that they understood it. "They will be ambitious of telling you what I gibber, in my outlandish speech, of your great relation; they will civilly imagine and utter something very handsome that *might* be there, showing at once their ignorance and parts."

As might have been expected from his antipathy to All Souls, the crotchety Thomas Hearne derided both orations as "wretched stuff, being neither Latin nor sense," but Young had his revenge in that footnote to his printed version in which he relegated that "learned mole" to the fifteenth century. Oration and epistle were the ebullition of youthful high spirits, but a quarter of a century later the author regarded them from such a more sober standpoint as to advise their omission from his works.

It was on the 20th of June, 1716, that Young delivered his Codrington oration, and we have to wait for the return of that date in the following year ere he comes to view again. In the interval Addison had become Secretary of State and had taken Tickell into his office at Whitehall, from whence the latter, on the 20th of June, 1717, is found penning a letter to his and Young's friend, George Bubb, who was absent in Spain on a diplomatic mission. This is the epistle which establishes the fact of Bubb Dodington's connection with Oxford, but it is still more interesting for the following item of news: "Mr. Carey, who is just returned to town from a survey of his lady's jointure in Wales, tells me that Mr. Young has promised to pass part of the summer with him at Sheen, where Sir William

Temple was our friend's predecessor."<sup>1</sup> Young's prospective summer host was, of course, the Henry Carey of *Sally in our Alley* fame, and Tickell's reference is valuable as suggesting that that gifted poet and musician was already married and in possession of sufficient means to keep up a considerable establishment. Young had doubtless made his acquaintance at Addison's "little senate" in Button's coffee-house.

To this year—1717—must be assigned the beginning of the poet's association with the notorious Philip, Duke of Wharton, Pope's "scorn and wonder of our days." Much ingenuity has been expended in explaining the origin of that connection, but, as is so often the case, the simplest and most probable solution of the problem has been overlooked. It has been shown that by this date Young was on intimate terms with Addison, whose connection with the Wharton family was already eight years old. "It was the Marquis of Wharton"—so Spence reports Young as saying—"who first got Addison a seat in the House of Commons, and soon after carried him down with him to Winchelsea. Addison was charmed with his son (afterwards Duke of Wharton), not only as his patron's son, but for the uncommon degree of genius that appeared in him. He used to converse and walk often with him." Addison, then, is the most obvious link between Young and his patron's volatile son.

By the date at which we have now arrived, Wharton had returned from his madcap tour on the Continent, and in the autumn of 1717 crossed to Dublin to take his seat in the Irish House of Peers. The probabilities are that Young bore him company on that journey, and that this was the occasion when he made the acquaintance of Swift and learned that that ruthless satirist could on occasion be "very grave." It was many years later that Young related the pathetic anecdote which led him to that conclusion, but as it belongs to this period of his biography, it may be quoted here. "I remember," he said, when recalling this memory of the "laughter-loving" Swift, "as I and others were taking with him an evening's

<sup>1</sup> B.M. Egerton MS. 2174, f. 310.

walk, about a mile out of Dublin, he stopped short : we passed on ; but, perceiving that he did not follow us, I went back, and found him fixed as a statue, and earnestly gazing upward at a noble elm, which in its uppermost branches was much withered and decayed. Pointing at it, he said, ‘I shall be like that tree : I shall die at the top.’”<sup>1</sup>

Owing to Croft’s original and careless blunder, which has, of course, been industriously repeated by most subsequent writers, it has been asserted again and again that prior to this date, as early, indeed, as the publication of *The Last Day*, Young was in the receipt of a Court pension. This falsehood has been based on the following lines in Swift’s *On Poetry : A Rhapsody*—

“ Harmonious Cibber entertains  
The Court with annual birth-day strains ;  
Whence Gay was banish’d in disgrace ;  
Where Pope will never show his face ;  
Where Young must torture his invention,  
To flatter knaves, or lose his pension.”

If Croft or any of his slavish copyists had read the whole poem with ordinary intelligence they would have observed that its opening lines contained an allusion to Young’s satires on *Love of Fame*, the first of which was not published until 1725, and that consequently Swift’s lines must have been written subsequent to that date. As a matter of fact, however, they were not written until 1733, which is rather fatal to their value as testimony to Young’s financial position in 1714 ! Besides, it was not until 1729 that Gay was “banish’d in disgrace.” Young’s pension, indeed, was not bestowed until some twelve years after the publication of *The Last Day*.

After a poetic silence of five years, he once more courted the suffrages of the reading public with *A Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job*, which he dedicated to the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Macclesfield, who was thought to be ambitious of posing as a Maecenas. That Young was drawing a bow at a venture is obvious from the opening sentence of his address.

<sup>1</sup> *Conjectures on Original Composition*.

“ My Lord,” he wrote, “ though I have not the honour of being known to your lordship, I presume to take a privilege which men of retirement are apt to think themselves in possession of, as being the only method they have of making their way to persons of your lordship’s high station without struggling through multitudes for access.” He could not, he added, approach so high a personage with “ less ceremony than that of a dedication,” and proceeded to excuse the subject of his poem on the plea that Macclesfield held in the “ utmost veneration ” those sacred books from whence it was derived, happily oblivious of the day when his patron was to be bracketed with Jack Shepard and Jonathan Wild as the third of “ the greatest rogues that ever existed.” Although credited by Young with “ all the talents of a patron,” Macclesfield does not appear to have exerted any of them on behalf of the poet. A few years later, indeed, he was involved in that impeachment and conviction for corruption which ended his public career.

Of the poem itself little need be said. Apart from its weak rhymes, the paraphrase errs on the score of wordiness, and leaves the reader, like its hero, “ o’erwhelmed.” The intolerable length and verbosity of the Almighty’s speeches, greatly amplified from the original, must crush the reader as they did Job. One test passage may be cited, that in which Young gives his version of the famous description of the horse—

“ Survey the warlike horse ! didst thou invest  
 With thunder his robust distended chest ?  
 No sense of fear his dauntless soul allays ;  
 ’Tis dreadful to behold his nostrils blaze ;  
 To paw the vale he proudly takes delight,  
 And triumphs in the fullness of his might ;  
 High rais’d, he snuffs the battle from afar,  
 And burns to plunge amid the raging war ;  
 And mocks at death, and throws his foam around,  
 And in a storm of fury shakes the ground.  
 How does his firm, his rising heart, advance  
 Full on the brandish’d sword and shaken lance ;  
 While his fix’d eyeballs meet the dazzling shield,  
 Gaze, and return the lightning of the field !



He sinks the sense of pain in gen'rous pride,  
 Nor feels the shaft that trembles in his side ;  
 But neighs to the shrill trumpet's dreadful blast  
 Till death ; and when he groans, he groans his last."

Young had a tender regard for this poem. Many years later he regarded it as the best of his productions, an opinion which may be cited as another illustration of the axiom that poets are not the best judges of their own work. That the subject, especially the description of the war-horse, had engaged his attention for many years is obvious from the fact that his one identified contribution to the *Guardian* deals with that theme.

One other poem he gave to the world shortly before he challenged popular approval with a different kind of composition. On a June day of 1719 Addison's life came to an untimely end, and that loss was the occasion of Young's *Letter to Mr. Tickell*. It is not lacking in warmth of feeling or fervid eulogy ; it pays due tribute to the "statesman, patriot, Christian, and the friend" ; it selects with unerring insight the immortal part of Addison's work, and happily describes the effect of his essays—

"The varied labours of his easy page,  
 A chance amusement, polish'd half an age" ;

but for sheer poetic merit the encomium was far excelled by Tickell's panegyric. Two of the lines addressed more immediately to Tickell—

"In joy once join'd, in sorrow now for years,  
 Partner in grief, and brother of my tears"—

were regarded by Croft as presenting insuperable difficulties for Young's biographer, whereas it is obvious that they were an allusion to his and Tickell's happy days at Oxford, to their common grief for Harrison's early death, and their renewed sorrow for the loss of Addison.

As has been seen, all Young's direct attempts to secure a patron by poetic courtiership had failed ; but by March,

1719, his introduction to Philip, Duke of Wharton, had borne fruit in the shape of an annuity of £100 which that unstable peer had settled on his new friend. The poet was now in his thirty-fifth year, but, save for the addition of Wharton's annuity, his worldly prospects were no brighter than when he was elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1708. It was at this juncture, however, that he made a new bid for gold as well as glory.

## CHAPTER III

### DRAMATIST

1719-1726

THAT Young should have turned his attention to the drama was, given his poetic endowments and remembering his associations, practically inevitable. There is convincing proof that he was a frequenter of the theatre as early as 1710, for in one of the letters of his old age he indulged in a reminiscence of Betterton's acting, a player whose career ended early in 1710. Again, the extract quoted in the previous chapter from his *Epistle to Lord Lansdowne* is proof of the study he had devoted to the drama, apart from his confession that he had a "passion for the stage." As a lad at Winchester, indeed, he had made a friendship which was to link him with the theatrical world of London, for his boyhood companions at that school included the brother of Colley Cibber, that actor, dramatist and manager who by 1710 had become the controlling authority of Drury Lane Theatre.

Nor should it be forgotten that in the first quarter of the eighteenth century dramatic authorship was the most profitable field for the *litterateur*. Not, of course, that the hundred nights' runs of the twentieth century were even dreamt of, but that what with his copyright fees and the proceeds of his "author's nights" the writer of a successful play could count upon harvesting a substantial sum. Young had but to look around the "little senate" at Button's to be reminded of the golden possibilities of dramatic authorship. There was Ambrose Philips, for example, whose *Distressed Mother*, although but an adaptation of Racine's *Andromaque*, had been such a phenomenal success. Even more pronounced had been the triumph of Addison with his *Cato*, a play which had made Booth a wealthy man and had enriched each of the three managers by £1,500. Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore*

too, and Henry Carey's *The Contrivances*, not to mention other examples, had furnished additional evidence of the fortune which awaited the competent dramatist.

Young was in a more enviable position than most of the aspirants to theatrical fame and affluence. Owing to the monopoly held by the two patented theatres, the demand for new plays was small. Yet the supply was enormous. "Besides the tragedies acted, there were almost as many not acted but printed. Closet dramas, common in the Elizabethan period, grew more numerous after the Restoration. Whether the writer scorned or was scorned by the manager, an appeal to the reading public was always easy and apparently sometimes profitable."<sup>1</sup> As the friend of the leading "Wits" of the town, whose influence was able to make or mar a play, and as the early companion of Cibber's brother, Young was favoured above most; if he could produce an actable drama he could count upon it being produced at Drury Lane.

By drawing too large an inference from an ambiguous allusion in a periodical of the day, it has been asserted that Young's career as a dramatist dates from 1713, whereas his first authentic appearance in that capacity belongs to the spring of 1719. It may have been that his first play, *Busiris, King of Egypt*, was in process of writing at the earlier date, but it was not brought to the test of the stage until eight years later. It is hardly surprising that he elected to stake his fortune as a playwright on tragedy rather than comedy. Notwithstanding the quickness of his wit in familiar conversation, and his keen sense of humour, he was conscious that the bent of his muse was serious. He knew she was a "melancholy maid," taking most delight in "dismal scenes." To the end of his days, too, he delighted more in tragedy than in comedy. "We want not," he wrote in his seventy-sixth year, "to be diverted at an entertainment, where our greatest pleasure arises from the depth of our concern. But whence, by the way, this odd generation of pleasure from pain? The movement of our melancholy passions is pleasant, when we

<sup>1</sup> Thorndike, *Tragedy*, 307.

ourselves are safe ; we love to be at once miserable and unhurt ; so are we made ; and so made, perhaps, to show us the Divine goodness ; to show that none of our passions are designed to give us pain, except when being pained is for our advantage on the whole ; which is evident from this instance, in which we see that passions the most painful administer greatly, sometimes, to our delight.”<sup>1</sup> If, then, he could not compete with his friend Carey in such an extravagance as *The Contrivances*, he might be successful in following the example of Addison.

And he followed that example in more than one respect. For prior to the staging of *Cato*, and when yet he had not the authority of a successful dramatist to enforce his theories, Addison had laid it down that “as the principal design of tragedy is to raise commiseration and terror in the minds of the audience, we shall defeat this great end, if we always make virtue and innocence happy and successful.” In the same issue of the *Spectator* the essayist cited the authority of Aristotle, who, he said, had observed that the tragedies which ended unhappily always pleased the people and won the awards of the judges.

Whatever may have been the date of its composition, it was not until March 7th, 1719, that *Busiris* was seen on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre. That it was produced then seems to have been due to the special consent of the Duke of Newcastle, the Lord Chamberlain of those days, for in his dedication of the printed version to that nobleman Young implied that the presentation had been in some danger of delay, from which it was rescued by his “Grace’s free indulgence.” The dedication also contains an enigmatic reference to another service for which he was indebted to Newcastle, an “undeserved and uncommon favour in an affair of some consequence, foreign to the theatre.” What value we are to attach to those words, it is impossible to say ; but in view of the unrestrained flattery of the address as a whole it may not have amounted to much.

Far more considerable was the debt the dramatist owed

<sup>1</sup> *Conjectures on Original Composition.*

to Cibber for the distinguished cast selected for the performance. The title *rôle* was committed to the imposing Thomas Elrington, while the more important male part—that of Myron—had for its exponent so great a favourite and so accomplished an actor as Barton Booth. The minor male characters were entrusted to such admirable actors as John Mills, Robert Wilks, Thomas Walker and John Thurmond, while the female *rôles* of Myris and Mandane were sustained by Mrs. Thurmond and Mrs. Oldfield.

Much criticism has been expended upon *Busiris* on the score of its anachronisms and indebtedness to classical authors, as though Shakespeare himself had not been guilty of like offences ; and exception might be taken to those assertions in the prologue which claimed this was the first Egyptian play to appear on the English stage and described Busiris as “ the proudest monarch of the proudest age ” of the land of the Nile ; yet when all deductions have been made, the fact remains that the tragedy kept the stage for nine performances, and that the sum Young received for his copyright—£84—was far above the average. It is of the essence of tragedy, especially eighteenth century tragedy, that it must abound in declamatory speeches, but if a manager could be found with courage to make the test, it is highly probable that *Busiris* might capture even a twentieth century audience.

Taking the story as Young tells it, and waiving all questions of historical accuracy or conveyings from classical authors, the plot of *Busiris* turns upon rivalry in love, the heroine, Mandane, whose father, Nicanor, is the greatest general of Egypt, being the object of contest between the hero, Memnon, and Myron, the son of the king. Busiris has attained the throne by bloodshed, inspired thereto by Myris, the sister of the previous monarch, and in achieving his ambition has made inveterate enemies of the sons and friends of his numerous victims. Among these Memnon is a leader, and when the play opens he and his comrades are plotting a rebellion to drive Busiris from the throne. It is at this juncture that Mandane discovers her favoured lover paying homage to his father's

memory beside his tomb, and reproaches him for leaving her company for that "dismal shade." The dialogue between the two is an example of Young's skill in setting his starting-point before his audience.

*Mem.* Why hast thou brought those eyes to this sad place,  
Where darkness dwells, and grief would sigh secure  
In welcome horrors and beloved night ?  
Thy beauties drive the friendly shades before them,  
And light up day e'en here. Retire, my love :  
Each joyful moment I would share with thee,  
My virtuous maid ; but I would mourn alone.

*Man.* What have you found in me so mean, to hope  
That while you sigh, my heart can be at peace ?  
Your sorrows flow from your Mandane's eyes.

*Mem.* O my Mandane !

*Man.* Wherefore turn you from me ?  
Have I offended, or are you unkind ?  
Ah me ! a sight as strange as pitiful !  
From this big heart, o'ercharged with generous  
sorrow,

See the tide working upward to his eye,  
And stealing from him in large silent drops,  
Without his leave ! Can these tears flow in vain ?

*Mem.* Why will you double my distress, and make  
My grief my crime, by discomposing you ?  
And yet I can't forbear ! Alas, my father !  
That name excuses all : what is not due  
To that great name, which life or death can pay ?

*Man.* Speak on, and ease your labouring breast : it swells  
And sinks again ; and then it swells so high,  
It looks as it would break. I know 'tis big  
With something you would utter. Oft in vain  
I have presumed to ask your mournful story,  
But ever have been answered with a frown.

*Mem.* O my Mandane ! did my tale concern  
Myself alone, it would not lie conceal'd ;

But 'tis wrapt up in guilt, in royal guilt,  
 And therefore 'tis unsafe to touch upon it.  
 To tell my tale, is to blow off the ashes  
 From sleeping embers, which will rise in flames  
 At the least breath, and spread destruction round.  
 But thou art faithful, and my other self ;  
 And, O ! my heart this moment is so full,  
 It bursts with its complaints, and I must speak.  
 Myris, the present queen, was only sister  
 Of great Artaxes our late royal lord :  
 Busiris, who now reigns, was first of males  
 In lineal blood, to which this crown descends.  
 Not with long circumstance to load my story,  
 Ambitious Myris fired his daring soul,  
 And turn'd his sword against her brother's life ;  
 Then, mounting to the tyrant's bed and throne,  
 Enjoy'd her shame, and triumphed in her guilt.

*Man.* So black a story well might shun the day.

*Mem.* Artaxes' friends, a virtuous multitude,  
 Were swept away by banishment or death  
 In throngs, and sated the devouring grave.  
 My father !—Think, Mandane, on your own  
 And pardon me !  
 The tyrant took me, then of tender years,  
 And rear'd me with his son,—a son since dead.  
 He vainly hoped, by shows of guilty kindness,  
 To wear away the blackness of his crime,  
 And reconcile me to my father's fate.  
 Hence have I long been forced to stay my vengeance  
 To smooth my brow with smiles, and curb my  
 tongue,  
 While the big woe lies throbbing at my heart.

From that dialogue the subsequent action flows. The plot is ripening for the overthrow of Busiris ; around the tomb of Memnon's father the conspirators vow to attack the tyrant that very night.



A little later the same day the young prince, Myron, and the veteran general, Nicanor, return to the city from a triumphant military expedition, in the course of which Nicanor has saved Myron's life,—saved it, unhappily, to his daughter's sorrow. For on meeting Mandane again Myron at once renews his suit, though she is anxious not to hear him.

*Man.* My lord, my duty calls ; I must not stay.

*Myr.* Give me a moment : I have that to speak  
Will burst me if suppress'd. O heavenly maid !  
Thy charms are doubled ; so is thy disdain.  
Who is it, tell me, who enjoys thy smile ?  
There is a happy man, I swear there is ;  
I know it by your coldness to your friend.  
That thought has fix'd a scorpion on my heart,  
That stings to death. And is it possible  
You ever spoke of Myron in his absence,  
Or cast at leisure a light thought that way ?

*Man.* I thought of you, my lord, and of my father,  
And pray'd for your success ; nor must I now  
Neglect to give him joy.

*Myr.* Yet stay ; you shall not go. Ungrateful woman !  
I would not wrong your father ; but, by heaven,  
His love is hatred if compared with mine.  
I understand whence this unkindness flows ;  
Your heart resents some licence of my youth,  
When love had touch'd my brain. You may  
forgive me,  
Because I never shall forgive myself ;  
But that you live, I'd rush upon my sword.  
If you forgive me, I shall now approach,  
Not as a lover only, but a wretch  
Redeem'd from baseness to the ways of honour,  
And to my passion join my gratitude.  
Each time I kneel before you, I shall rise  
As well a better as a happier man,  
Indebted to your virtue and your love.

*Man.* I must not hear you.

*Myr.* O torment me not !

Hear me you must, and more—Your father's valour,  
In the late battle, rescued me from death :  
And how shall I be grateful ? Thou'rt a princess ;  
Think not, Mandane, this is a sudden start,  
A flash of love, that kindles and expires.  
Long have I weigh'd it : since I parted hence,  
No night has pass'd but this has broke my rest,  
And mix'd with every dream.

To complete the balance of this act it closes with a scene between Busiris and his Queen, for the proper understanding of which it is necessary to remember that while Busiris has been dallying with a woman named Amelia his wife has been guilty of amorous longings for a courtier named Syphoces. Yet she has the boldness to request her husband to sign a warrant for Amelia's execution.

*King.* I wish, my queen,

This still had slept a secret, for thy sake ;  
But since thy restless jealousy of soul  
Has been so studious of its own disquiet,  
Support it as you may :—I own I've felt  
Amelia's charms, and think them worth my love.

*Queen.* And darest thou bravely own it too ? O insult !  
Forgetful man ! 'tis I, then, owe a crown !  
Thou hadst still grovell'd in the lower world,  
And view'd a throne at distance, had not I  
Told thee, thou wast a man and, dreadful thought,  
Through my own brother cut thy way to empire.  
But thou might'st well forget a crown bestow'd ;  
That gift was small : I listen'd to thy sighs,  
And raised thee to my bed.

*King.* I thank you for it :

The gifts you made me were not cast away :  
I understand their worth : " husband " and " king "

Are names of no mean import ; they rise high  
 Into dominion, and are big with power.  
 Whate'er I was, I now am king of Egypt,  
 And Myris' lord.

*Queen.* I dream : art thou Busiris ?  
 Busiris, that hast trembled at my feet ?  
 And art thou now my Jove, with clouded brow  
 Dispensing fate, and looking down on Myris ?  
 Do'st thou derive thy spirit from thy crimes ?  
 'Cause thou hast wrong'd me, therefore dost thou  
 threaten,  
 And roll thine eyes in anger ? Rather bend,  
 And sue for pardon !—O detestable !  
 Burn for a stranger's bed !

*King.* And what was mine,  
 When Myris first vouchsafed to smile on me ?

*Queen.* Distraction ! death ! upbraided for my love !  
 Thou are not only criminal, but base.  
 Mine was a godlike guilt ; ambition in it ;  
 Its foot in hell, its head above the clouds :  
 For know, I hated when I most caress'd :  
 'Twas not Busiris, but the crown, that charm'd me,  
 And sent its sparkling glories to my heart.  
 But thou canst soil thy diadem with slaves.

*King.* Syphoces is a king, then.

*Queen.* Ha !

*King.* Let the fair Amelia know, the king attends her.

At no stage of the tragedy is there any lack of action. The merely printed page leads the reader on with sustained interest, but even as he reads he can easily realise how far more absorbing the story would become when presented by voice and gesture and theatrical trappings. The fourth act reaches a stirring climax of alarums and excursions, preparing the way for the catastrophe of the final scene. The one flaw to the modern playgoer, perhaps, in this and Young's other tragedies, is that there is no comedy relief. That he leaves his hero and

heroine, for all their virtue and wrongs, overwhelmed in the last act may be charged partly to Addison's account and partly to his own view of the emotions. There is, however, a measure of poetic justice in the fact that Busiris is defeated by the rebels and dies of his wounds. Moreover, the spectators of the tragedy were not allowed to leave Drury Lane in a mood of unrelieved depression. For there was an Epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, and delivered, we may be sure, with that trick of half-closed eyes to which she resorted when she wished to emphasise a telling line. Scorning the canon of those austere critics who

“To mournful plays deny brisk epilogues,”

on the theory that

“The cit, who owns a little fun worth buying,  
Holds half-a-crown too much to pay for crying,”

the epilogue should have put the audience in a glowing humour again by its reprobation of the author.

“’Tis strange that crimes the same, in different plays,  
Should move our horror, and our laughter raise.  
Love's Jove secure the comic actor tries ;  
But, if he's wicked, in bland verse he dies.  
The farce where wives prove frail, still makes the best ;  
And the poor cuckold is a standing jest :  
But our brave bard, a virtuous son of Isis,  
Counts a bold stroke in love among the vices ;  
In blood and wounds a guilty land he dips ye,  
And wastes an empire for one ravish'd gipsy.  
What musty morals fill an Oxford head—  
To notions of pedantic virtue bred !  
There each stiff don at gallantry exclaims,  
And calls fine men and ladies filthy names :  
They tell you, rakes and jilts corrupt a nation :  
—Such is the prejudice of education !”

That the management of Drury Lane Theatre was satisfied with the nine days' run of *Busiris*, and the reception accorded that piece by the public, is a justifiable inference from the fact

that two years later, on the 18th of April, 1721, a second tragedy by the same author was produced. This was Young's *The Revenge*, a play which, despite the fact that its initial representation ended with the sixth performance, was destined for a highly successful career in the repertory of the eighteenth century, for, as Doran states, it was acted more frequently and more recently than Addison's famous *Cato*. Several of the actors who had appeared in *Busiris* were in the cast of *The Revenge*, including Booth, Wilks, Thurmond and Mills; but in the two female rôles Mrs. Thurmond and Mrs. Oldfield were supplanted by Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Horton, of the former of whom Dr. Johnson said he had never seen her equal in tragic acting. As the run of the tragedy was comparatively short, and as he received only £50 for his copyright, Young's first profits from *The Revenge* must have been considerably less than those he derived from *Busiris*.

As in the case of his earlier tragedy, the author has been charged with constructing his play from materials not his own, but a more serious defect to the student of comparative drama is that *The Revenge* seems a distinct challenge to Shakespeare's *Othello*. Of course, such a comparison would be fatal, yet there were those of Young's own time who voted his tragedy "superior" to that of Shakespeare! What may be urged in his defence is that even the author of *Othello* could not claim originality for his plot, and that he had no monopoly of the emotions of revenge and jealousy.

By far the most considerable blemish in *The Revenge* is the inadequacy of its motive. Although jealousy plays a large part in the tragedy, it is sheer vindictiveness which moves the villain Zanga to devise the plots whereby that other emotion is brought into play. Hence the supreme importance of his motive; it must be of such a character as to fully account for the malevolence of his hatred of Alonzo. In that essential matter, however, Young made a mistake, as will become clear from the dialogue in which he explains to his mistress—Isabella—the cause of his hatred of Alonzo. Isabella was surprised at Zanga's avowal.

*Zan.* Hear, then. 'Tis twice three years since that great man  
 (Great let me call him ; for he conquer'd me)  
 Made me the captive of his arm in fight :  
 He slew my father, and threw chains o'er me,  
 While I, with pious rage, pursued revenge.  
 I then was young ; he placed me near his person,  
 And thought me not dishonour'd by his service.  
 One day (may that returning day be night,  
 The stain, the curse of each succeeding year !)  
 For something, or for nothing, in his pride  
 He struck me ; (while I tell it, do I live ?)  
 He smote me on the cheek—I did not stab him ;  
 For that were poor revenge ! E'er since, his folly  
 Has strove to bury it beneath a heap  
 Of kindnesses, and thinks it is forgot.  
 Insolent thought, and like a second blow !  
 Affronts are innocent, where men are worthless ;  
 And such alone can wisely drop revenge.

*Isa.* But with more temper, Zanga, tell your story :  
 To see your strong emotion startles me.

*Zan.* Yes, woman, with a temper that befits it.  
 Has the dark adder venom ? So have I,  
 When trod upon. Proud Spaniard, thou shalt feel me !  
 For from that day, the day of my dishonour,  
 I from that day have cursed the rising sun,  
 Which never fail'd to tell me of my shame :  
 I from that day have blessed the coming night,  
 Which promised to conceal it ; but in vain ;  
 The blow return'd for ever in my dream.  
 Yet on I toil'd, and groan'd for an occasion  
 Of ample vengeance : none is yet arrived.  
 Howe'er, at present I conceive warm hopes  
 Of what may wound him sore in his ambition ;  
 Life of his life, and dearer than his soul.  
 By nightly march he purposed to surprise  
 The Moorish camp ; but I have taken care  
 They shall be ready to receive his favour.

Such was the motive of Zanga's consuming hatred ; not the death of his father, or his continued captivity, but a hasty blow from Alonzo's hand. It is hardly surprising that even Young's friend, Carey, should have burlesqued that motive in his lively *Chrononhotonthologos*, which he did by making General Bombardinian exclaim when struck by his monarch—

“A blow! shall Bombardinian take a blow?  
Blush! Blush, thou sun! Start back, thou rapid ocean!  
Hills! vales! seas! mountains! all commixing, crumble,  
And into chaos pulverize the world;  
For Bombardinian has received a blow,  
And Chrononhotonthologos shall die.”

But if Zanga had taken so speedy a vengeance, there would not have been any tragedy. Perhaps Young hoped that by putting his weak motive in the opening scene of his play it would soon be forgotten in the torrent of action that followed.

Zanga was not to achieve his revenge by Alonzo being ambushed in battle. That scheme is quickly eliminated from the tragedy in favour of jealousy. The story, in brief, is this—an anticipation of Longfellow's device in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. For Alonzo and Carlos, his friend, are both really in love with the heroine, Leonora, though Carlos is the first to realise that fact. While Carlos was a prisoner in the hands of the Moors he commissioned his friend Alonzo to be his “gentle advocate in love,” exactly as John Alden undertook to plead for the New England captain. And the issue is the same, for his vicarious service awakens Alonzo to the reality of his own passion. Many passages are devoted to the struggle between friendship and love, Zanga intervening to secure the final triumph of Alonzo. And then he sets to work to effect the ruin of his happiness by arousing the demon of jealousy in Alonzo's heart. By means of a forged letter and a portrait of Carlos, which is placed under Leonora's pillow, he at last convinces Alonzo that he was not the first to enjoy his wife's favours. After Carlos has been murdered for his

supposed treachery to his friend, the final scene takes place in the garden bower where—as Zanga reported—Carlos had anticipated Alonzo in marital rights. Leonora is asleep when her husband enters.

*Alon.* Ye amaranths! ye roses, like the morn!  
 Sweet myrtles, and ye golden orange-groves!  
 Why do ye smile? Why do you look so fair?  
 Are ye not blasted as I enter in?  
 Yes; see how every flower lets fall its head!  
 How shudders every leaf without a wind!  
 How every green is as the ivy pale!  
 Did ever midnight ghosts assemble here?  
 Have these sweet echoes ever learn'd to groan?  
 Joy-giving, love-inspiring, holy bower!  
 Know, in thy fragrant bosom, thou receivest  
 A—murderer! O! I shall stain thy lilies,  
 And horror will usurp the seat of bliss.  
 So Lucifer broke into Paradise,  
 And soon damnation follow'd. (*He advances.*) Ha!  
 she sleeps;  
 The day's uncommon heat has overcome her:  
 Then take, my longing eyes, your last full gaze.  
 O, what a sight is here! How dreadful fair!  
 Who would not think that being innocent?  
 Where shall I strike? Who strikes her, strikes  
 himself.  
 My own life-blood will issue at her wound.  
 O my distracted heart!—O cruel Heaven!  
 To give such charms as those, and then call man,  
 Mere man, to be your executioner!  
 But see, she smiles! I never shall smile more;  
 It strongly tempts me to a parting kiss.  
 Ha! smile again! She dreams of him she loves:  
 Curse on her charms! I'll stab her through them  
 all.

(*As he is going to strike, she wakes.*)



*Leo.* My lord, your stay was long ; and yonder lull  
Of falling waters tempted me to rest,  
Dispirited with noon's excessive heat.

*Alon.* Ye powers ! with what an eye she mends the day !  
While they were closed, I should have given the blow.

*(Aside.)*

O for a last embrace ! and then for justice !  
Thus Heaven and I shall both be satisfied.

*Leo.* What says my lord ?

*Alon.* Why, this Alonzo says :

If love were endless, men were gods. 'Tis that  
Does counterbalance travel, danger, pain :  
'Tis Heaven's expedient to make mortals bear  
The light, and cheat them of the peaceful grave.

*Leo.* Alas ! my lord, why talk you of the grave ?  
Your friend is dead ; in friendship you sustain  
A mighty loss ; repair it with my love.

*Alon.* Thy love ? Thou piece of witchcraft ! I would say,  
Thou brightest angel ! I could gaze for ever.  
Where hadst thou this ? Enchantress, tell me where ?  
Which with a touch works miracles, boils up  
My blood to tumults, and turns round my brain !  
E'en now thou swimm'st before me : I shall lose thee :  
No, I will make thee sure, and clasp thee all.  
Who turn'd this slender waist with so much art,  
And shut perfection in so small a ring ?  
Who spread that pure expanse of white above,  
On which the dazzled sight can find no rest,  
But, drunk with beauty, wanders up and down  
For ever, and for ever finds new charms ?  
But, O those eyes ! those murderers ! O whence,  
Whence didst thou steal their burning orbs ? From  
heaven ?  
Thou didst ; and 'tis religion to adore them.

By this conflict of emotion the climax is held in suspense for a considerable time, and it is easy to imagine how, as acted

by Booth and Mrs. Porter, the scene must have wrought the audience to a tense pitch of excitement. Just as the catastrophe appears inevitable, too, the action is lowered for a moment, only to be swiftly brought back to the exciting point by the sinister intervention of Zanga. Finally, when Leonora has been driven to unendurable frenzy by Alonzo charging her with unchastity, she plunges a dagger into her heart. Then the Spaniard learns, too late, that his wife is guiltless, that Carlos has been slain innocently; and Zanga, satiated with revenge, is about to take his own life when Alonzo prevents him and thrusts the dagger into his own heart. Zanga's last words are spoken over his victim's body, and if they are inconsistent with his character, as most will feel, they probably represent the dramatist's final effort to enlist a certain amount of sympathy for his villain. The moral, however, is placed on the lips of Alvarez, the father of the heroine.

- Zan.* Is this Alonzo? Where's the haughty mien?  
Is that the hand which smote me? Heavens, how  
pale!  
And art thou dead? So is my enmity:  
I war not with the dust: the great, the proud,  
The conqueror of Afric, was my foe.  
A lion preys not upon carcases.  
This was the only method to subdue me.  
Terror and doubt fall on me: all thy good  
Now blazes; all thy guilt is in the grave.  
Never had man such funeral applause:  
If I lament thee, sure, thy worth was great.  
O Vengeance! I have follow'd thee too far,  
And to receive me Hell blows all her fires.
- Alv.* Dreadful effect of jealousy! a rage  
In which the wise with caution will engage;  
Reluctant long, and tardy to believe,  
Where, sway'd by Nature, we ourselves deceive;  
Where our own folly joins the villain's art,  
And each man finds a Zanga in his heart.

Reference has already been made to the fact that *The Revenge* became exceedingly popular with eighteenth century playgoers ; indeed it retained its power to please well on into the following century, having been edited for stage purposes by J. P. Kemble in 1814. Among the other honours won by the tragedy should be mentioned its translation into French in 1787 and its great favour with the organisers of amateur theatricals. One of those private performances reminded Lady Mary Wortley Montagu of a similar occasion, for in a letter of May, 1748, addressed to the Countess of Bute, she wrote—

“I give you thanks, dear child, for your entertaining account of your present diversions. I find the public calamities have no influence on the pleasures of the town. I remember very well the play of *The Revenge*, having been once acquainted with a party that intended to represent it, not one of which is now alive. I wish you had told me who acted the principal parts. I suppose Lord Bute was Alonzo, by the magnificence of his dress.”<sup>1</sup>

Although there is no clue to the fact in Lady Montagu's letter, Young's correspondence with the Duchess of Portland shows that this amateur performance was organised by that unfailing friend, and was given in her London house at Whitehall. The duchess invited the author to be present, but instead he addressed her a letter which ought to have given the aristocratic amateurs a good conceit of themselves. By this date Young had long been rector of Welwyn, from whence the following letter of March, 1748, was addressed.

“Except Betterton, I never knew a player that was a good tragedian, and I never knew a dancing-master that was a genteel man ; and the cause is the same, they both overshoot the mark. This is a fault not to be feared in your Grace's band ; and the reason is plain ; for when persons of low education undertake characters of dignity, they can only

<sup>1</sup> Moy Thomas, *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ii, 171.

guess at what it is, and so mistake ; but when persons in high life do the same, they know what true dignity is ; they, for the time, only change their habits and names ; whereas the former must change their manners and nature, which is a much harder task.

“ Besides, Madam, who so likely to act a part well, that is, to pretend to be what they are not, as persons of a Court education. Dissimulation, which is putting off ourselves, and simulation, which is putting on another’s character, I take to be the whole science of a courtier. Nor do I speak this to their dishonour, but the contrary ; for, through the depravity of our nature, there is so much in the human heart that ought to be concealed, that I cannot but lay it down for a maxim that, ‘ They who know not how to dissemble, know not how to please.’” If this startles your Grace’s delicacy, consider, Madam, what is virtue, and religion itself ? It is little more than curbing the natural tendencies of our perverse hearts. If, therefore, courtiers instead of curbing or altering their passions, which they can do to admiration on secular motives, they did the same on nobler views, courtiers would be the best Christians in the world. Your Grace may, therefore, congratulate some of your friends on being so near that, which, I daresay, they very little suspected.

“ For the reason given above, I believe, with your Grace, that the play will be acted to great perfection ; and there is no entertainment that could give me greater pleasure. But then I like not the reason you give for my being present at it. ‘ Since you are to preach so soon,’ etc., says your Grace. I perceive, Madam, the satire that is couched in this argument ; you mean, ‘ since you are to preach, you can’t do wiser than to come to the best school for acting a part.’ I grant, Madam, no preacher can come up to his precepts, but then he thinks it is his duty to do so ; whereas many a tailor has acted Alexander the Great, who never thought it his duty to demolish the Persian Empire. This is the difference—which your Grace would artfully sink—between a Roscius and a St. Paul.

“ However, your Grace’s tartness should not rob me of an entertainment that would give me so great delight, had I not many real tragedies, at this severe season, acting roundabout me at home, in several families’ distresses, disorders, and deaths. And why has Providence ordered that melancholy tales should give us pleasure, but to habituate our hearts to tenderness, that they may not grow callous when opportunities offer, which may render our tenderness of some real use ? I fear, Madam, I cannot be in town soon enough ; but, if not, I am not utterly at a loss for some consolation under the disappointment of my desire to wait upon you. For my comfort is, that even at this distance my pride will be highly gratified, though my poor famished eyes and ears do not share the entertainment. For, as it is said, that Pygmalion’s statue grew warm under his embraces, and of stone became flesh ; so, I am persuaded, how dull and inanimate a figure soever *The Revenge* may make on the common stage, its condition will be very much altered under such hands ; their approbation, not to mention their performance, will give it life.

“ I beg my best compliments for the great honour done me.”<sup>1</sup>

That characteristic letter, with its quaint flavour of old-time courtesy and its undercurrent of mature wisdom, has carried us twenty-seven years forward in the history of *The Revenge* ; a return must be made to the date of its publication for the purpose of noting that the printed version was inscribed to “ His Grace the Duke of Wharton.” This was one of the dedications which Young subsequently suppressed, and he has been blamed alike for writing and cancelling it, though it is not difficult to excuse him for either.

Gratitude for favours received or promised, and the contemporary opinion of Wharton’s abilities, were sufficient extenuation for the penning of the dedication ; the subsequent degeneration of that patron’s character is exoneration enough

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 309, 310.

for its suppression. That at the time Young inscribed his play to Wharton he was not alone in holding a high estimate of his gifts needs no further proof than the admissions of Pope that "wond'ring Senates hung on all he spoke," and that save in one particular he was endowed with every "gift of nature and of art." It has been shown, too, that Addison was "charmed" with the young peer, while the fact that he was created a duke in his twentieth year is a significant indication of how he was regarded in court circles. At this period of Wharton's life, indeed, it seemed highly probable that he was destined to take a high place among the statesmen of his day, and Spence has recorded an anecdote which proves his willingness to become a scholar again that he might fit himself for political leadership. Having an ambition to "shine in the House as an orator, he found he had almost forgotten his Latin, and that it was necessary, with his present views, to recover it. He therefore desired Dr. Young to go to Winchenden with him, where they did nothing but read Tully and talk Latin for six weeks, at the end of which the duke talked Latin like that of Tully." In fact, these years have been well described as the "most reputable" in Wharton's career.

One instance of the duke's generosity to the poet—his granting him an annuity of £100 in the March of 1719—has already been mentioned; a second credits him with having presented him with £2,000 in acknowledgment of the dedication of *The Revenge*, though there are good reasons for doubting whether that large gift was ever made. It is clear, however, that the £100 annuity of 1719 was settled on the poet, and that when that had fallen into arrears the duke granted him another annuity for the same sum. This annual pension was bestowed in recognition of Young's proficiency in "learning and the polite arts," as the preamble put it, but according to the poet himself it was to recompense him for refusing a tutorship of equal value. There was another financial transaction which was political in its origin, the details of which are set forth in the report of a law suit argued before Lord Chancellor Hardwicke in 1740. "Doctor Young"—so runs

that record—"in his examination on the 4th of February, 1730, before the Master, sets forth at large the considerations of the annuities ; and likewise the Duke of Wharton's giving him a bond dated the 15th of March, 1721-2, in the penalty of £1,200 conditioned for the payment of £600 in consideration of his taking several journies, and being at great expense in order to be chosen a member of the House of Commons at the desire of the said Duke, and in consideration of his giving up two livings of £200 and £400 *per ann.* value in the gift of All Souls College, on the promise made by the said Duke of serving and advancing him in the world."

In giving his verdict on the two annuities and the bond for £600, the Lord Chancellor decided that the poet's claim for the former was well substantiated, inasmuch as they had been granted for a legal consideration ; but he refused to regard the £600 bond in the same light. This was a serious pecuniary loss to Young, for he must have been at considerable expense in contesting the parliamentary election at Cirencester in the March of 1722. It appears from W. R. Williams' account of that contest that Young stood as a Whig candidate against the two old Tory members of the constituency—Thomas Master and Benjamin Bathurst—and that the normal expenses of the election were increased by a subsequent but fruitless petition.<sup>1</sup>

As it has been hastily concluded that the two annuities, representing an annual income of £200, were "paid regularly" from the date of the second grant, and as the poet, on that supposition, has been charged with ingratitude for suppressing his dedication to Wharton, it is necessary to explain that Young only profited from one of the annuities and that his enjoyment of that was delayed for many years. It has been imagined that the whole business was settled by the Lord Chancellor's decree of March, 1740, but a letter of the poet to the Duchess of Portland, dated from London on the 29th of October, 1743, shows that there had been a further delay. The Mr. Murray mentioned by Young was of course William

<sup>1</sup> *The Parliamentary History of the County of Gloucester*, 166.

Murray, the distinguished advocate and judge who became the first Earl of Mansfield.

“ This day by your friend Mr. Murray’s assistance I carried just one half of my point, the other is referred to Prince Posterity. Mr. Murray has certainly learnt your Grace’s art, for he helped me to the wing without cutting off the leg. For the matter stood thus : I had two annuities of different dates, that of the second date he sliced off for me with infinite address and dexterity, and left that of the first date still sticking to the Duke’s estate. . . . On Tuesday, Madam, I go to Welwyn for some writings necessary to the final conclusion of this matter, for the Chancellor’s decree is not yet more than minuted, and some trouble is to follow its being perfected, before a poor creature embarked in law for twenty-four years can come safe to land.”<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-four years take us back to Young’s career as a dramatist, the most worldly phase of his life. Nothing was more improbable at this time than that he should become a minister of religion. His chief companions were the “ Wits ” of the coffee-houses, the managers and players of Drury Lane, and ambitious politicians such as Wharton and Budd Dodington and Lord Stanhope. To this period belongs that anecdote of Spence which tells how when invited to “ The World ” Club in Pall Mall he was requested to write the usual epigram on a tumbler, and declined because he had no diamond. Lord Stanhope lent him his, and he wrote immediately—

“ Accept a miracle instead of wit ;  
See two dull lines with Stanhope’s pencil writ.”

To have been a guest at such a gathering bespeaks him a man of the town, a character which he supports in that story which links him with the pleasures of the Thames and Vauxhall. “ Young, in the early part of his life, was fond of music, and touched the German flute with much taste. Being once on

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 278.



the river with some ladies, he played them several tunes, and then put the flute in his pocket. Some officers rowing by just as he ceased playing, one of them rudely asked him why he left off. 'For the same reason that I began,' replied Young, 'to please myself.' One of them immediately told him, that if he did not continue playing, he would directly throw him into the Thames. His female friends began to be much alarmed, and Young, on their account, played till they reached Vauxhall, where both parties spent the evening. The doctor had marked his man, and took an opportunity, in one of the dark walks, to tell the son of Mars that he expected to meet him at such a place in the morning, to give him a gentleman's satisfaction, and that he chose swords for the weapons. The officer was surprised on their meeting to see Young advance towards him with a large horse pistol, with which, he told him, he would instantly shoot him through the head if he did not dance a minuet; after some difficulties he complied, and the officer reflecting on his impertinent conduct, acknowledged the justice of his treatment."<sup>1</sup>

In his criticism of *The Revenge* Richard Cumberland avers that that tragedy was written at Dodington's seat of Eastbury in Dorsetshire, adding that the shady path frequented by the poet was named "Young's Walk" by the "partial proprietor" of the estate. The story harmonises with the chronology of Dodington's increase in wealth, for it was in 1720 he succeeded to Eastbury and began spending £140,000 on his Vanbrugh mansion there. It also receives additional support from a chance allusion in the poem in which Christopher Pitt invited Young in 1722 to celebrate the glories of a royal military review on Sarum Plain. Those lines demand a place here too for the picture they give of the poet's social enjoyments.

" While with your Dodington retir'd you sit,  
Charm'd with his flowing Burgandy and wit;  
By turns relieving with the circling draught,  
Each pause of chat, and interval of thought :

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotaliana*, ii, 363.

Or through the well-glaz'd tube, from business freed,  
 Draw the rich spirit of the Indian weed ;  
 Or bid your eyes o'er Vanbrugh's models roam,  
 And trace in miniature the future dome  
 (While busy fancy with imagin'd power  
 Builds up the work of ages in an hour) ;  
 Or, lost in thought, contemplative you rove,  
 Through opening vistas, and the shady grove ;  
 Where a new Eden in the wilds is found,  
 And all the seasons in a spot of ground :  
 There, if you exercise your tragic rage,  
 To bring some hero on the British stage ;  
 Whose cause the audience with applause will crown,  
 And make his triumphs or his tears their own :  
 Throw by the bold design ; and paint no more  
 Imagin'd chiefs, and monarchs of an hour ;  
 From fabled worthies, call thy Muse to sing  
 Of real wonders, and Britannia's king."<sup>1</sup>

As *The Revenge* had been acted at the time Pitt wrote those lines, his reference to Young's dramatic labours may imply that he was already engaged upon the third and last of his tragedies, *The Brothers*. It is not, however, until the early months of 1724, two years later, that the play makes a definite appearance in the poet's biography, due to the fact that he had become acquainted with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with whom he discussed the tragedy from time to time. From one of his letters to this friend, to which the date of February, 1724, has been assigned, it appears that the production of *The Brothers* was contemplated for that season.

"A great cold and a little intemperance has given me such a face as I am ashamed to show, though I much want to talk with your ladyship. For my theatrical measures are broken. *Marianne* brought its author above £1,500, *The Captives* above £1,000, and *Edwin*, now in rehearsal, has already, before acting, brought its author above £1,000. Mine, when acted, will not more than pay for the paper on which it is written ; but the moment I get abroad I will wait on your ladyship, and explain further. Only this for the present :

<sup>1</sup> Chalmers, *English Poets*, xii, 371.

for the reason mentioned, I am determined to suppress my play for this season at least. The concern you showed for its success is my apology for this account, which were otherwise very impertinent.”<sup>1</sup>

A second note to the same correspondent is interesting as showing that Young was on friendly terms with the unfortunate Richard Savage, to whom he conveyed a gift from Lady Montagu, and as furnishing evidence that even so late as the March of 1726 he was still busy about political matters, for he excused his not waiting upon her ladyship on the ground that he was “obliged to go down to-morrow to Wycombe election.” In this third letter *The Brothers* is his sole theme.

“The more I think of your criticisms, the more I feel the just force of them. I will alter those which are alterable; those that are not I beg you to make a secret of, and to make an experiment on the sagacity of the town, which I think may possibly overlook what you have observed, for the players and Mr. Dodington, neither of whom were backward in finding fault, or careless in attention, took no notice of the flaw in Demetrius’s honour, or Erixene’s conduct, and I would fain have their blindness continue till my business is done. The players are fond of it, and as it has been said on a point of a little more importance, *si populus vult decipi, decipi piatur*.

“Your alteration in the fifth act will be of exceeding advantage in more views than one. I will wait on your ladyship with it as soon as I have done it, which will be, I believe, Monday morning. But that I’m satisfied you want no inducement to assist me as much as you can, I should add that I have more depending on the success of this particular piece than your ladyship imagines.”<sup>2</sup>

What Young had in his mind in his closing words seems to admit a simple explanation. The lawsuit of 1740 proves that

<sup>1</sup> Moy Thomas, *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ii, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Moy Thomas, *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ii, 17.

the Duke of Wharton had not redeemed that bond for £600 which he had given in connection with the Cirencester election, and as by this date—the spring of 1726—Wharton had left England hopelessly in debt, it is certain that Young's annuities were in arrears and that his means were reduced to his All Souls fellowship. This explains his evident anxiety for the success of *The Brothers*, which was now in active rehearsal at Drury Lane. Ere it could be produced, however, he had resolved to enter the ministry of the Church of England, and, deeming the character of a dramatist incompatible with his future profession, he persuaded Cibber and his co-managers to relinquish the play. They resigned it, Croft said, "with some reluctance to the delicacy of the new clergyman."

Nor was it until more than a quarter of a century later that *The Brothers* reached the stage. That delay militated considerably against the chances of its success; for although the leading characters were impersonated by such accomplished players as David Garrick and Mrs. Bellamy, no histrionic talent could outweigh the handicap of changed theatrical taste. The reason which prompted Young to allow the belated performance to take place in the March of 1753 does credit to his generosity, however much it may be thought to reflect on his sincerity. According to a letter addressed to the Duchess of Portland on the 20th of April, 1750, he was nearly three years in making up his mind.

"I was lately in conversation with a certain gentleman who pressed me much to bring my old tragedy on the stage, and he told me that your Grace had promised to second him in that request. I should be very glad to know at your Grace's leisure if this be true; for I have certain inferences to make from the veracity, or the contrary, of this reporter."<sup>1</sup>

Who this "certain gentleman" was does not transpire; he may have been an advocate of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in behalf of whose funds Young at last allowed

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 317.

*The Brothers* to be produced at Drury Lane. Or, on the contrary, if Doran's story can be trusted, it may have been Mrs. Bellamy's flattery which overcame Young's scruples to re-appearing as a dramatist, and that the destination of the profits was his own device to quiet his conscience. Whatever the facts, the preparations for the performance took him back to scenes to which he had long been a stranger.

"The irresistible Bellamy was then the idol of the world of fashion, and Young readily acceded to her request that she might read *The Brothers* to the players. The request rendered Garrick furious, although it was grounded on the young lady's personal knowledge of the author. The green-room was in an uproar. Roscius claimed the principal part for Mrs. Pritchard; and when George Anne poutingly offered to surrender the character assigned to her by the doctor, Young vehemently opposed it with an emphatic, 'No, no!' Mrs. Bellamy accordingly read the piece, and assumed the liberty of criticising it. She expressly objected to the line, 'This, then, in thunder' as not being in a concatenation with the delicacy of the fine lady who utters it. The reverend author protested that it was the most forcible line in the piece; but Mrs. Bellamy thought it would be more so if it were improved by the introduction of lightning as well as thunder.

"The good doctor was somewhat nettled at the lady's wit; and he declared that *The Brothers* was the best piece he had ever written. "I am afraid, doctor," rejoined the lady pertly, 'that you will do with me as the Archbishop of Toledo did with Gil Blas on a similar occasion. But I cannot help reminding you of a tragedy called *The Revenge*.' The author took the remark in considerable dudgeon; but the sparkling young actress, who sincerely esteemed him, exerted all her powers to smooth the plumes that her wit had ruffled; and she did this with such effect that the doctor, after offering to cancel the line objected to, invited himself to dine with her, and did so in company with Garrick and rough Quin."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ii, 162, 163.

Although *The Brothers* is indebted to Corneille's *Persée et Demetrius* and to classical biography, Young fully justified his borrowings. Save, indeed, for the rather chaotic condition of the fifth act, which must be as bewildering on the stage as it is in the closet, and which all Lady Montagu's suggestions did not enable him to reduce to order, *The Brothers* is the best constructed and the most impressive of his tragedies. Set in the Grecian world, its theme is the rivalry of the brothers Perseus and Demetrius for the love of Erixene, complicated by the suspicions which fall on Demetrius owing to his friendliness toward Rome. The schemes of Perseus result in the two brothers being brought to trial in the presence of their father, Philip, King of Macedon, an episode which provides one of the most dramatic scenes of the play. Perseus has charged Demetrius with attempts upon his life and with plotting treason against his father to curry favour with Rome.

*Dem.* He charges me with treason.  
 If I'm a traitor, if I league with Rome,  
 Why did his zeal forbear me till this hour?  
 Was treason then no crime, till (as he feigns)  
 I sought his life? Dares Perseus hold so much  
 His father's welfare cheaper than his own?  
 Less cause have I, a brother, to complain.  
 He says I wade for empire through his blood:  
 He says I place my confidence in Rome:  
 Why murder him, if Rome will crown my brow?  
 Will then a sceptre, dipped in brother's blood,  
 Conciliate love, and make my reign secure?  
 False are both charges; and he proves them false  
 By placing them together.

*Ant.* That's well urged.

*Dem.* Mark, sir, how Perseus, unawares, absolves me  
 From guilt in all, by loading all with guilt.  
 Did I design him poison at my feast?  
 Why then did I provoke him in the field,  
 That, as he did, he might refuse to come?

When angry he refused, I should have soothed  
 His roused resentment, and deferred the blow ;  
 Not destined him that moment to my sword,  
 Which I before instructed him to shun.  
 Through fear of death, did he decline my banquet ?  
 Could I expect admittance then at his ?  
 These numerous pleas, at variance, overthrow  
 Each other, and are advocates for me.

*Per.* No, sir, Posthumius is his advocate.

*King.* Art thou afraid, that I should hear him out ?

*Dem.* Quit then, this picture, this well-painted fear,  
 And come to that which touches him indeed.  
 Why is Demetrius not despised of all,  
 His second in endowments, as in birth ?  
 How dare I draw the thoughts of Macedon ?  
 How dare I gain esteem with foreign powers ?  
 Esteem, when gained, how dare I to preserve ?  
 These are his secret thoughts ; these burn within ;  
 These sting up accusations in his soul ;  
 Turn friendly visits to foul fraud, and murder ;  
 And pour in poison to the bowl of love.  
 Merit is treason in a younger brother.

*King.* But clear your conduct with regard to Rome.

*Dem.* Alas ! dread sir, I grieve to find set down  
 Among my crimes, what ought to be my praise.  
 That I went hostage, or ambassador,  
 Was Philip's high command, not my request :  
 Indeed, when there, in both those characters,  
 I bore in mind to whom I owed my birth :  
 Rome's favour followed. If it is a crime  
 To be regarded, spare a crime you caused ;  
 Caused by your orders, and example, too.  
 True, I'm Rome's friend, while Rome is your ally :  
 When not, this hostage, this ambassador,  
 So dear, stands forth the fiercest of her foes ;  
 At your command, flies swift on wings of fire,  
 The native thunder of a father's arm.

- Ant.* There spoke at once the hero and the son.
- Dem.* To close: To thee, I grant, some things are due;  
 Not for thy kindness, but malignity:  
 Thy character's my friend, though thou my foe:  
 For, say, whose temper promises most guilt?  
 Perseus, importunate, demands my death:  
 I do not ask for his: Ah! no; I feel  
 Too powerful nature pleading for him here:  
 But were there no fraternal tie to bind me  
 A son of Philip must be dear to me.  
 If you, my father, had been angry with me,  
 An elder brother, a less awful parent,  
 He should assuage you, he should intercede,  
 Soften my failings, and indulge my youth;  
 But my asylum drops its character;  
 I find not there my rescue, but my ruin.
- Per.* His bold assurance—
- King.* Do not interrupt him;  
 But let thy brother finish his defence.
- Dem.* O Perseus! how I tremble as I speak!  
 Where is a brother's voice, a brother's eye?  
 Where is the melting of a brother's heart?  
 Where is our awful father's dread command?  
 Where a dear dying mother's last request?  
 Forgot, scorned, hated, trodden under foot!  
 Thy heart, how dead to every call of nature!  
 Unson'd! unbrothered! nay, unhumanised!  
 Far from affection as thou art near in blood!

As if the moral of the tragedy were not to be sufficiently obvious, a hortatory prologue, written by Robert Dodsley and spoken by William Havard, precluded the performance, while for a finale the dramatist provided an epilogue which was designed to clear up the muddle of the last act. But Garrick would have none of Young's epilogue. His objection seems to have been that the tragedy was solemn enough to render any further gloom unnecessary. Hence the lively pen of David



Mallet was requisitioned to fit the play with a brisk postscript, the speaking of which was committed to that accomplished mistress of suggestive emphasis—Kitty Clive. The epilogue roundly scolded the dramatist for the tragic nature of his play and represented the speaker as having invited him to lighten it with a few jokes.

“He humm’d, and haw’d; then, waking from his dream,  
Cry’d, I must preach to you his moral scheme.  
A scheme, forsooth! to benefit the nation!  
Some queer, odd whim of pious propagation!  
Lord! talk so, here—the man must be a widgeon:  
Drury may propagate—but not religion.”

So the joke was dragged in after all, greatly to Young’s disgust, but the audience was implored to allow the play to “live, nine days, like other wonders.”

It fell short of that total by one performance. While the tragedy was still running, Young remained in London as the guest of his novelist friend, Samuel Richardson, who in a letter to one of his numerous lady correspondents recorded the sequel of the enterprise.

“I do not know why I did not mention Dr. Young’s tragedy, No reason for it, but hurry and forgetfulness. Will it be hereafter believed, that the *Earl of Essex* had a run; and that a play of the author of *Night Thoughts* was acted to thin houses but just eight nights? The doctor, you have heard, intended the benefit accruing to an author, to go to the Society for propagating the Gospel. He, finding it did not answer his expectations, as to profits, took them to himself, (not £400) and gave a thousand guineas to that society. I had some talk with him on this great action. ‘I always,’ said he, ‘intended to do something handsome by this society. Had I deferred it to my demise, I should have given away my son’s money. All the world are inclined to pleasure; I myself love pleasure as much as any man; could I have given myself a greater by disposing of the same sum to a different use, I should have done it.’”<sup>1</sup>

*The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, vi, 246, 247.

Scant justice has been done to Young's dramatic work. Dr. Johnson was too indolent to examine it for himself, though he admitted that the incidents and diction of *The Revenge* were "original." Of *The Brothers* he remarked that he might be "allowed to say nothing, since nothing was ever said of it by the public," a dictum which indicates ignorance of its eight days' run. A more modern and competent student of the eighteenth century drama, however, has declared that "the literary genius of Young possessed vigour and variety enough to distinguish his tragedies from the ordinary level of Augustan plays."<sup>1</sup> No doubt his characters are declamatory, yet, save for a jarring word now and then, their speeches have an impressive cumulative force, the effect of which is materially heightened by their stirring deeds.

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Ward, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, viii, 529.

## CHAPTER IV

### SATIRIST

1725-1728

By a characteristically careless misreading of the manuscript of Spence's anecdotes, Croft credits the Duke of Grafton with having given Young £2,000 in appreciation of his satires on the *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion*. Had either of those poems or the collected edition been inscribed to Grafton the story might have been feasible; as a matter of fact, however, Spence attributed the donation to the Duke of Wharton. That destroys its credibility, for at the date when the first of the satires was published, 1725, Wharton had dissipated all his wealth. Nevertheless it was a persistent tradition that the *Love of Fame* had greatly enriched its author, for his son assured Dr. Johnson that Young had "received several pounds of subscription-money for his *Universal Passion*, but had lost it all in the South Sea." Johnson doubted the truth of that assertion on the ground that he had never seen a subscription-book; he would have based his scepticism on a surer foundation had he remembered that the South Sea Bubble had burst some five years prior to the appearance of the first satire. Then there is Croft's additional statement that Young "acquired no vulgar fortune, more than £3,000," by his satires.

All these guesses were probably nothing more than what may be called the afterglow of the celebrity achieved by the collected edition. The *Love of Fame*, despite the competition of Pope's more vindictive satires, was a popular book; a copy dated 1752 is described as the fifth edition, and it must be remembered that each of the seven poems had had a considerable sale in a separate form. From these data may have arisen one or other of the traditions noted above. In its

cumulative results the volume did probably prove the most profitable of Young's works prior to the *Night Thoughts*, yet at the time he wrote the preface to the collected edition his harvest had been nothing to boast of, for he declared that poetry, like love, was addicted to a blindness which made her "mistake her way to preferments and honours." When penning that half-whimsical confession of failure he could not foresee that his effort in a new vein was to bring him greater success than his earlier poems, or anticipate that his satires were to be less of a "wooden leg" than his dedications to Lord Lansdowne and the rest.

Many of Dr. Johnson's literary verdicts have been ruthlessly revised by later critics, yet few of those who carefully read the *Love of Fame* will question his opinion that that is "a very great performance." It is, of course, by the *Night Thoughts* that Young is best remembered in English literature; he himself in gathering his various productions together described them as "by the Author of the *Night Thoughts*"; but the modern reader who would make the acquaintance of the poet at his best must turn to the satires, for it is in those pictures of the follies of his age that Young's command of antithesis is most effective. The appreciation which Joseph Warton wrote of the *Love of Fame* in his essay on Pope needs little revision: "A work that abounds in wit, observation on life, pleasantry, delicacy, urbanity, and the most well-bred raillery, without a single mark of spleen or ill nature. These are the first characteristic satires in our language, and are written in an ease and facility of style very different from this author's other works; the fifth and sixth, on the Character of Women, are incomparably the best. The introduction to these two satires, particularly the address to Lady Betty Germain, are perhaps as elegant as anything in our language. After reading these pieces, so full of a knowledge of the world, one is at a loss to know what Mr. Pope could mean by saying, that though Young was a man of genius, yet that he wanted common sense."

Wharton's remark that the satires are devoid of ill nature was

anticipated by Young ; he was not, he said, "conscious of the least malevolence to any particular person through all the characters." Yet many of his contemporaries were pilloried in the poems : peers such as the Duke of Chandos, for his passion for building, and the Earl of Pembroke, in virtue of his mania for classical statues ; public entertainers such as John Heidegger, for his scandalous masquerades ; and curio-collectors such as Sir Hans Sloane, for the extravagance of his credulity ; yet in no case is there a trace of that venom which mars so many of Pope's lines. The names of real persons introduced by Young are, however, but few compared with the numerous portraits in his gallery ; he was not concerned, as was so often the case with Pope, to employ his muse in the castigation of personal enemies or for the revenge of his friends' quarrels. From that prostitution of his talent, indeed, he was spared by his more genial theory of the purpose of satire. It would have been obvious, even had he not acknowledged the indebtedness, that he took the kindly Horace for his model. No man, he realised, could mix much with the world without seeing and hearing many things to cause him anger or amusement, but to lash those frailties and and follies with the scorn of Juvenal, who was "ever in a passion," was to defeat the highest end of satire. To laugh at the misconduct of the world would relieve one of any more disagreeable passion. Moreover, "laughing satire bids the fairest for success : the world is too proud to be fond of a serious tutor ; and when an author is in a passion, the laugh, generally, as in conversation, turns against him. This kind of satire only has any delicacy in it." An author, he added, who lacked the latter quality betrayed too great a contempt for mankind, and too high an opinion of himself.

This theory did not imply that he was afraid to wound his readers' feelings ; he realised how absurd it was

"To write a satire which gave none offence,"

and held that "all friends to vice and folly" were the foes of his muse ; but in the last resort, without leaving a "sting"

in a brother's heart, the chief object of satire was to be the  
 "shining supplement of public laws"  
 and to

"sharply smile prevailing folly dead."

While, then, Young subscribed fully to the theory of "laughing satire," he was equally determined to employ it as an instrument of morality instead of making it the vehicle of private animosity. His infusion of humour prevented his poems from degenerating into mere invective.

If Dr. Wharton made too large a claim in describing Young's verses as "the first characteristical satires in our language," it must not be forgotten that they antedated Pope's caustic imitations of Horace. Indeed, it seems probable that we owe their existence to their very priority, for it was Pope's silence which prompted Young to raise his voice. Forgetful, perhaps, of his own contributions to the poetic flattery of his age, he had become convinced of the need of a different type of verse, and set out in the opening lines of his first satire some of the causes which had urged him to write.

"When flatter'd crimes of a licentious age  
 Reproach our silence, and demand our rage;  
 When purchas'd follies, from each distant land,  
 Like arts, improve in Britain's skilful hand;  
 When the law shows her teeth, but dares not bite,  
 And South Sea treasures are not brought to light;  
 When churchmen scripture for the classics quit,  
 Polite apostates from God's grace to wit;  
 When men grow great from their revenues spent,  
 And fly from bailiffs into parliament;  
 When dying sinners, to blot out their score,  
 Bequeath the church the leavings of a whore;  
 To chafe our spleen, when themes like these increase,  
 Shall panegyric reign, and censure cease?  
 Shall poesy, like law, turn wrong to right,  
 And dedications wash an Ethiop white,  
 Set up each senseless wretch for nature's boast,  
 On whom praise shines, as trophies on a post?  
 Shall fun'ral eloquence her colours spread,  
 And scatter roses on the wealthy dead?  
 Shall authors smile on such illustrious days,  
 And satirise with nothing—but their praise?"

According to Young's diagnosis, all the evils of his age had their root cause in the love of fame. That was the motive of the proud or the modest, the rich or the poor, the Tory or the Whig, the dancer or the soldier. It even—and here he owned his own kinship with human frailty—trimmed “the midnight lamp in college cells.” Nor were the pious exempt—

“Some go to church, proud humbly to repent,  
And come back much more guilty than they went :  
One way they look, another way they steer,  
Pray to the gods, but would have mortals hear ;  
And when their sins they set sincerely down,  
They'll find that their religion has been one.”

These generalisations, however, were merely intended to clear the way for specific examples. Brief allusions to ambitious orators, and laborious students, and pleasure-loving men of the town, were but the preludes to ampler measures. And first among his full-length portraits of “British fools” he places the over-proud peer.

“My lord comes forward ; forward let him come !  
Ye vulgar ! at your peril, give him room :  
He stands for fame on his forefathers' feet,  
By heraldry prov'd valiant or discreet.  
With what a decent pride he throws his eyes  
Above the man by three descents less wise !  
If virtues at his noble hands you crave,  
You bid him raise his fathers from the grave.  
Men should press forward in fame's glorious chase ;  
Nobles look backward, and so lose the race.  
Let high birth triumph ! What can be more great ?  
Nothing—but merit in a low estate.  
To virtue's humblest son let none prefer  
Vice, though descended from the Conqueror.  
Shall men, like figures, pass for high, or base,  
Slight, or important, only by their place ?  
Titles are marks of honest men, and wise ;  
The fool, or knave, that wears a title, lies.  
They that on glorious ancestors enlarge,  
Produce their debt, instead of their discharge.”

Four other types are given special prominence in the first satire, the *nouveau riche* who has been floated to wealth on a

“South-Sea tide,” the collector of antiques who scorns an invitation to “turn his Venus into gold,” the aspirant to court favours, who boasts of “merely being out or in,” and the country squire, “whose erudition is a Christmas tale.” The latter character, christened Hippolitus, is made the occasion of that ironical panegyric of rural life which has been soberly interpreted as the embodiment of the poet’s own ideal.

As “South-Sea tides,” with a difference, are still with us, and as the virtuoso and the place-hunter are not extinct, it cannot be said that any of the foregoing types are out of fashion ; nor, with a possible exception or two, did the characters of Young’s second satire die out with the eighteenth century. To appreciate the first of these, symbolically named Florio, it is necessary to remember that the Tulipomania of the seventeenth century was still endemic in the first quarter of the eighteenth. Addison had gently derided the fad in one of his *Tatler* essays. Driven to a porch by a shower of rain, he had overheard several persons using the names of famous personages with extraordinary freedom, informing each other that “the Emperor of Germany was going off,” that the Duke of Marlborough “was in blooming beauty,” that the Prince of Hesse and the King of Sweden were “both running away,” and that the “Crown of France was very weak.” But his greatest shock was when he heard one of the company remark that if they would go along with him he would “show them a Chimney Sweeper and a Painted Lady in the same bed.” All this, of course, was tulip jargon, those high titles being but the names of different varieties of those “gay vegetables.” And the evesdropper subsequently learnt that the mistake of a foolish cook, who had used a handful of bulbs under the impression that they were onions, had resulted in her serving her master with a dish that cost him more than £1,000. Hence Florio was a legitimate object of Young’s satire, and if the tulipomaniac is extinct his successor survives in the orchid devotee or the thousand-pound sweet pea enthusiast.

“ Warm in pursuit of foxes, and renown,  
Hippolitus demands the sylvan crown ;



But Florio's fame, the product of a shower,  
 Grows in his garden, an illustrious flower !  
 Why teems the earth ? Why melt the vernal skies ?  
 Why shines the sun ? To make Paul Diack rise.  
 From morn to night has Florio gazing stood,  
 And wonder'd how the gods could be so good ;  
 What shape ! what hue ! was ever nymph so fair !  
 He dotes ! he dies ! he too is rooted there.  
 O solid bliss ! which nothing can destroy,  
 Except a cat, bird, snail, or idle boy.  
 In fame's full bloom lies Florio down at night,  
 And wakes next day a most inglorious wight ;  
 The tulip's dead ! See thy fair sister's fate,  
 O C—— ! and be kind ere 'tis too late.  
 Nor are those enemies I mention'd all ;  
 Beware, O florist, thy ambition's fall.  
 A friend of mine indulg'd this noble flame ;  
 A quaker serv'd him, Adam was his name ;  
 To one lov'd tulip oft the master went,  
 Hung o'er it, and whole days in rapture spent ;  
 But came, and miss'd it, one ill-fated hour :  
 He rag'd ! he roar'd ! ' What demon cropt my flower ? '  
 Serene, quoth Adam, ' Lo ! 'twas crusht by me ;  
 Fall'n is the Baal to which thou bow'dst thy knee.' "

After all, however, the satirist only adduces Florio and his tulips to point a wider moral. Amusement, even tulip-growing, is harmless ; the folly is in expecting fame for mere idleness. So there is a companion portrait of the bibliomaniac, the idolator of books as books, and especially gorgeous books.

" With what, O Codrus ! is thy fancy smit ?  
 The flower of learning, and the bloom of wit.  
 Thy gaudy shelves with crimson bindings glow,  
 And Epictetus is a perfect beau.  
 How fit for thee ! bound up in crimson, too,  
 Gilt, and, like them, devoted to the view !  
 Thy books are furniture. Methinks 'tis hard  
 That science should be purchas'd by the yard ;  
 And Tonson, turn'd upholsterer, send home  
 The gilded leather to fit up thy room.  
 If not to some peculiar end designed,  
 Study's the specious trifling of the mind ;  
 Or is at best a secondary aim,  
 A chase for sport alone, and not for game."

There is even a terse couplet for the inefficient librarian—

“Unlearned men of books assume the care,  
As eunuchs are the guardians of the fair.”

Two other products of Young's age, the “Wit” and the Macaroni, are so rare that they may be allowed to repose in his museum ; but the portrait of himself as an author has too much biographical value to be overlooked. He imagines the beau, Florello, retorting upon him.

“ ‘But who art thou ? ’ methinks Florello cries ;  
‘Of all thy species art thou only wise ? ’  
Since smallest things can give our sins a twitch,  
As crossing straws retard a passing witch,  
Florello, thou my monitor shalt be ;  
I'll conjure thus some profit out of thee.  
O thou myself ! abroad our counsels roam,  
And, like ill husbands, take no care at home :  
Thou too art wounded with the common dart,  
And love of fame lies throbbing at thy heart ;  
And what wise means to gain it hast thou chose ?  
Know, fame and fortune both are made of prose.  
Is thy ambition sweating for a rhyme,  
Thou unambitious fool, at this late time ?  
While I a moment name, a moment's past ;  
I'm nearer death in this verse, than the last :  
What then is to be done ? Be wise with speed ;  
A fool at forty is a fool indeed.”

As his first satire had brought him some expostulatory anonymous letters, so the second and first alike had provided the critics with texts for various academic objections. Some complained that the satires were too long, others that they violated the unities. These and others of the tribe, including “smart” reviewers, received his attention in his third poem.

“ ‘Your work is long,’ the critics cry. 'Tis true,  
And lengthens still, to take in fools like you :  
Shorten my labour, if its length you blame ;  
For, grow but wise, you rob me of my game ;  
As hunted hags, who, while the dogs pursue,  
Renounce their four legs, and start up on two.

Like the bold bird upon the banks of Nile,  
 That picks the teeth of the dire crocodile,  
 Will I enjoy, dread feast ! the critic's rage,  
 And with the fell destroyer feed my page.  
 For what ambitious fools are more to blame,  
 Than those who thunder in the critic's name ?  
 Good authors damn'd, have their revenge in this,  
 To see what wretches gain the praise they miss.

Balbutius, muffled in his sable cloak,  
 Like an old Druid from his hollow oak,  
 As ravens solemn, and as boding, cries,  
 ' Ten thousand worlds for the three unities !'  
 Ye doctors sage, who thro' Parnassus teach,  
 Or quit the tub, or practise what you preach.

One judges as the weather dictates ; right  
 The poem is at noon, and wrong at night :  
 Another judges by a surer gage,  
 An author's principles, or parentage ;  
 Since his great ancestors in Flanders fell,  
 The poem doubtless must be written well.  
 Another judges by the writer's look ;  
 Another judges, for he bought the book ;  
 Some judge, their knack of judging wrong to keep ;  
 Some judge, because it is too soon to sleep.

Thus all will judge, and with one single aim,  
 To gain themselves, not give the writer, fame.  
 The very best ambitiously advise,  
 Half to serve you, and half to pass for wise.

Critics on verse, as squibs on triumphs wait,  
 Proclaim the glory, and augment the state ;  
 Hot, envious, noisy, proud, the scribbling fry  
 Burn, hiss, and bounce, waste paper, stink, and die."

Epicures, sycophants, and punsters are pilloried in this satire, which, by its description of Britain as a "nurse for fools," anticipates Carlyle's wholesale denunciation. The rage for foreign opera comes in for an aside—

" Italian music's sweet, because 'tis dear ;  
 Their vanity is tickled, not their ear :  
 Their taste would lessen, if the prices fell,  
 And Shakespeare's wretched stuff do quite as well,—"

and there is a full-length sketch of Heidegger and his notorious midnight assemblies. Nor does this satire lack the personal

touch of its predecessor, for Young points a bit of advice with his own experience—

“ Be wise, Vincenna, and the court forsake ;  
Our fortunes there, nor thou, nor I, shall make.”

Under the titles of Chremes and Ghenno the fourth poem satirises those omniscient persons who can run an empire or a universe, the know-all amateur politician and the rationalist, the latter sketch paying tribute to the favourite eighteenth century apologetics. The idler, Narcissus, than whom no one “ does nothing with a better grace,” has a place in this gallery, and by his side is hung the portrait of the curio-collector.

“ If what is out of fashion most you prize,  
Methinks you should endeavour to be wise.  
But what in oddness can be more sublime  
Than Sloane, the foremost toyman of his time ?  
His nice ambition lies in curious fancies,  
His daughter’s portion a rich shell inhances,  
And Ashmole’s baby-house, is, in his view,  
Britannia’s golden mine, a rich Peru !  
How his eyes languish ! how his thoughts adore  
That painted coat, which Joseph never wore !  
He shows, on holidays, a sacred pin,  
That touch’d the ruff, that touch’d Queen Bess’s chin.  
‘ Since that great dearth our chronicles deplore,  
Since that great plague that swept as many more,  
Was ever year unblest as this ? ’ he’ll cry,  
‘ It has not brought us one new butterfly ! ’ ”

But the most vivid etching depicts those writers who were proud of their achievements in flattering the rich and great. The poet asks who were they who waited with grovelling servility on lords and ladies, and awards the palm to the “ men of ink.”

“ The writing tribe, who shameless auctions hold  
Of praise, by inch of candle to be sold :  
All men they flatter, but themselves the most,  
With deathless fame, their everlasting boast :  
For fame no cully makes so much her jest,  
As her old constant spark, the bard profest.

‘ Boyle shines in council, Mordaunt in the fight,  
 Pelham’s magnificent ; but I can write,  
 And what to my great soul like glory dear ? ’  
 Till some god whispers in his tingling ear,  
 That fame’s unwholesome taken without meat,  
 And life is best sustain’d by what is eat :  
 Grown lean, and wise, he curses what he writ,  
 And wishes all his wants were in his wit.

Ah ! what avails it, when his dinner’s lost,  
 That his triumphant name adorns a post ?  
 Or that his shining page, provoking fate !  
 Defends sirloins, which sons of dullness eat ?

What foe to verse without compassion hears,  
 What cruel prose-man can refrain his tears,  
 When the poor muse, for less than half-a-crown,  
 A prostitute on every bulk in town,  
 With other whores undone, tho’ not in print,  
 Clubs credit for Geneva in the mint ?  
 Ye bards ! why will you sing, tho’ uninspir’d ?  
 Ye bards ! why will you starve, to be admir’d ?  
 Defunct by Phoebus’ laws, beyond redress,  
 Why will your spectres haunt the frightened press ?  
 Bad metre, that excrescence of the head,  
 Like hair, will sprout, altho’ the poet’s dead.”

With the fourth satire Young took leave of his own sex, save for a few generalities in his final poem ; the fifth and sixth satires, which Wharton deemed the best, being devoted to women. Here, again, with the exception of a brief passage in the sixth poem, where he deals with vices at which it were “ a fault to smile,” Young’s urbanity does not fail him ; nor does he hide his adoration of the type of woman who is man’s consolation for the labours and anxieties of life.

“ Now what reward for all this grief and toil ?  
 But one ; a female friend’s endearing smile ;  
 A tender smile, our sorrows’ only balm,  
 And, in life’s tempest, the sad sailor’s calm.”

In the majority of cases the types selected for satire are distinguished by classical names, such as Zara and Xantippe and Delia and Daphne and Sempronia and Fulvia, but there are occasions when this symbolical nomenclature fails the poet

and forces him to use more general terms. All the usual types are here, however, with a certain proportion of undistinguishable shades, such as the gad-about, the horsey woman, the blue-stocking, the fortune-hunter, the woman of pleasure, the manly woman, the languid lady of the boudoir, the church patroness, the wine-bibber, and even the gambler. But first they are all massed together as afflicted alike with the one failing—the love of praise.

“Britannia’s daughters, much more fair than nice,  
 Too fond of admiration, lose their price ;  
 Worn in the public eye, give cheap delight  
 To throngs, and tarnish to the sated sight :  
 As unreserv’d, and beauteous, as the sun,  
 Through every sign of vanity they run ;  
 Assemblies, parks, coarse feasts in city-halls,  
 Lectures, and trials, plays, committees, balls,  
 Wells, bedlams, executions, Smithfield scenes,  
 And fortune-tellers’ caves, and lions’ dens,  
 Taverns, exchanges, bridewells, drawing-rooms,  
 Instalments, pillories, coronations, tombs,  
 Tumblers, and funerals, puppet-shows, reviews,  
 Sales, races, rabbits (and still stranger !) pews.”

Xantippe is sketched at length among the earliest of the portraits, a lady of “good breeding” but an incessant talker, one who, like Mrs. Caudle, continues her chatter to unseasonable hours and “shakes the curtains with her kind advice.” Of course, it is impossible to decide what specific models Young had in view, and it can be nothing more than a guess which makes Lady Wortley Montagu the prototype of his blue-stocking.

“O’er the belle-lettre lovely Daphne reigns ;  
 Again the god Apollo wears her chains :  
 With legs toss’d high, on her sophee she sits,  
 Vouchsafing audience to contending wits :  
 Of each performance she’s the final test ;  
 One act read o’er, she prophesies the rest ;  
 And then, pronouncing with decisive air,  
 Fully convinces all the town—she’s fair.”

Equally concise is the satire of Sempronia, the fortune-hunter

who jilted one admirer for another who had "one acre more," but Lemira, the ailing lady whose aches and pains are cured by a ticket for a ball, is described with ampler detail. These devotees of wealth and town delights suggest to the poet one of his happiest metaphors, which deserves to rank with Burn's famous series in *Tam O' Shanter*.

"Pleasures are few, and fewer we enjoy ;  
 Pleasure, like quicksilver, is bright and coy ;  
 We strive to grasp it with our utmost skill,  
 Still it eludes us, and it glitters still :  
 If seiz'd at last, compute your mighty gains ;  
 What is it, but rank poison in your veins ? "

As a contrast to the horsey woman, the Delia who "sit triumphant o'er the flying wheel," and the equally masculine Thalestris, whose phrase is as obscene as her accent is loud, there is an inimitable miniature of their extreme opposite.

"The languid lady next appears in state,  
 Who was not born to carry her own weight ;  
 She lolls, reels, staggers, till some foreign aid  
 To her own stature lifts the feeble maid.  
 Then, if ordain'd to so severe a doom,  
 She, by just stages, journeys round the room :  
 But, knowing her own weakness, she despairs  
 To scale the Alps—that is, ascend the stairs.  
 My fan ! let others say, who laugh at toil ;  
 Fan ! hood ! glove ! scarf ! is her laconic style ;  
 And that is spoke with such a dying fall,  
 That Betty rather sees, than hears the call :  
 The motion of her lips, and meaning eye,  
 Piece out th' idea her faint words deny.  
 O listen with attention most profound !  
 Her voice is but the shadow of a sound.  
 And help ! oh help ! her spirits are so dead,  
 One hand scarce lifts the other to her head.  
 If, there, a stubborn pin it triumphs o'er,  
 She pants ! she sinks away ! and is no more.  
 Let the robust, and the gigantic carve,  
 Life is not worth so much, she'd rather starve :  
 But chew she must herself ; ah cruel fate !  
 That Rosalinda can't by proxy eat."

All through these satires, indeed, Young diversifies his effects with rare skill, a felicitous example of his varied portraiture being provided by the drawings of Lyce and Portia. If, he has been saying, women moulded themselves on the best of their sex, then "all but adoration" would be their due.

"'But adoration !' give me something more,  
 Cries Lyce, on the borders of threescore :  
 Nought treads so silent as the foot of time,  
 Hence we mistake our autumn for our prime ;  
 'Tis greatly wise to know, before we're told,  
 The melancholy news, that we grow old.  
 Autumnal Lyce carries in her face  
 Memento mori to each public place.  
 O how your beating breast a mistress warms,  
 Who looks through spectacles to see your charms !  
 While rival undertakers hover round,  
 And with his spade the sexton marks the ground,  
 Intent not on her own, but others' doom,  
 She plans new conquests, and defrauds the tomb.  
 In vain the cock has summon'd sprites away,  
 She walks at noon, and blasts the bloom of day.  
 Gay rainbow silks her mellow charms infold,  
 And nought of Lyce but herself is old.  
 Her grizzled looks assume a smirking grace,  
 And art has levell'd her deep-furrow'd face.  
 Her strange demand no mortal can approve,  
 We'll ask her blessing, but can't ask her love.  
 She grants, indeed, a lady may decline  
 (All ladies but herself) at ninety-nine.  
 O how unlike her is the sacred age  
 Of prudent Portia ! her grey hairs engage ;  
 Whose thoughts are suited to her life's decline :  
 Virtue's the paint that can with wrinkles shine.  
 That, and that only, can old age sustain ;  
 Which yet all wish, nor know they wish for pain.  
 Not num'rous are our joys, when life is new ;  
 And yearly some are falling of the few ;  
 But when we conquer life's meridian stage,  
 And downward tend into the vale of age,  
 They drop apace ; by nature some decay,  
 And some the blasts of fortune sweep away ;  
 Till naked quite of happiness, aloud  
 We call for death, and shelter in a shroud."



In the second of these satires on women Young shows a marked advance in command over terse characterisation, for most of the additional types are effectively hit off by the introductory couplet. Sententiousness has rarely been better illustrated than in these examples.

“Lavinia is polite, but not profane ;  
To church as constant as to Drury Lane.”

“Flavia is constant to her old gallant,  
And generously supports him in his want.”

“Amasia hates a prude, and scorns restraint ;  
Whate'er she is, she'll not appear a saint.”

“Unmarried Abra puts on formal airs ;  
Her cushion's threadbare with her constant prayers.”

“Lucia thinks happiness consists in state,  
She weds an idiot, but she eats in plate.”

“Mira, endow'd with every charm to bless,  
Has no design, but on her husband's peace.”

“Julia's a manager ; she's born for rule ;  
And knows her wiser husband is a fool.”

Some of the portraits are naturally the female replicas of the masculine subjects of the earlier poems, but in most cases the second attempt is richer in detail and vividness. This is notably so in the satire of the female sloven.

“Go breakfast with Alicia, there you'll see,  
Simplex munditiis, to the last degree :  
Unlac'd her stays, her night-gown is untied,  
And what she has of head-dress is aside.  
She drawls her words, and waddles in her pace ;  
Unwash'd her hands, and much besnuff'd her face.  
A nail uncut, and head uncomb'd, she loves ;  
And would draw on jack-boots, as soon as gloves.  
Gloves by Queen Bess's maidens might be miss'd ;  
Her blessed eyes ne'er saw a female fist.  
Lovers, beware ! to wound how can she fail  
With scarlet finger, and long jetty nail ?

For Harvey the first wit she cannot be,  
 Nor, cruel Richmond, the first toast, for thee.  
 Since full each other station of renown,  
 Who would not be the greatest trapes in town?  
 Women were made to give our eyes delight;  
 A female sloven is an odious sight."

Although intent upon satire, and rarely failing to keep his moral in view, Young relieves his lines with numerous touches which show how sensible he was to female charm. Drusa receiving her visitors in bed, Lavinia's "lifted fan," Memmia's coquettish style of handling her tea-cup, Flavia before her mirror, all contribute to that delicacy which the poet deemed so essential to the success of his task. Only once, as has been anticipated, does he emulate the Juvenal strain, in a passionate outburst against the vices of the age.

"What swarms of am'rous grandmothers I see!  
 And misses, ancient in iniquity!  
 What blasting whispers, and what loud declaiming!  
 What lying, drinking, bawding, swearing, gaming!  
 Friendship so cold, such warm incontinence;  
 Such griping av'rice, such profuse expense;  
 Such dead devotion, such a zeal for crimes;  
 Such licens'd ill, such masquerading times;  
 Such flatter'd guilt, and such inverted laws;  
 Such dissolution through the whole I find,  
 'Tis not a world, but chaos of mankind."

Something of this severity, too, dominates his description of the female gambler and the ruin she causes; with these exceptions he preserves his serenity unruffled. But the effect of this lay sermon is perhaps somewhat marred for modern readers by its final eulogy of Queen Caroline as the ineffable model of all female perfection.

One other poem completed the series, but this is more general than specific. It deals with abstractions rather than with concrete human types, and for that reason is the weakest of the set. Young's apology, however, for leaving other subjects to "some future strain" contains some of the most telling couplets he ever wrote.

“Some future strain, in which the muse shall tell  
How science dwindles, and how volumes swell.

How commentators each dark passage shun,  
And hold their farthing candle to the sun.

How tortur'd texts to speak our sense are made,  
And every vice is to the scripture laid.

How misers squeeze a young voluptuous peer ;  
His sins to Lucifer not half so dear.

How Verres is less qualified to steal  
With sword and pistol, than with wax and seal.

How lawyers' fees to such excess are run,  
That clients are redress'd till they're undone.

How one man's anguish is another's sport ;  
And ev'n denials cost us dear at court.

How man eternally false judgments makes,  
And all his joys and sorrows are mistakes.”

Sufficient illustrative passages have been given to demonstrate that Young's satires were not of the kind designed to extort blackmail. His pen was cleaner than Pope's ; there was no necessity to ward off his attacks by monetary bribes. Once more, in fact, he had taken Addison's teaching to heart ; whatever the temptation, or whatever the prospect of gain, he would not indulge in those “secret stabs” which are so common in the imitations of Horace. This explains why Swift thought Young was not “angry” enough in his satires, and why that same inconsistent writer ridiculed the author of the *Love of Fame* for his flattery of Sir Robert Walpole and Sir Spencer Compton, as though his own pen had not fawned upon Sir William Temple, King William, the Earl of Peterborough and the Earl of Oxford.

Of the seven satires five are openly inscribed to the Duke of Dorset, Bubb Dodington, Sir Spencer Compton, Lady Elizabeth Germain, and Sir Robert Walpole ; a sixth, the second poem, is, in the text, offered for the acceptance of Philip Dormer Stanhope, who was soon to succeed his father as the Earl of Chesterfield. With the exception of the praise of Walpole, which is certainly pitched in a high key, none of these dedications are offensive ; they do not, at any rate, exceed Swift's own example in similar addresses. In the

cases of Dodington and Stanhope it must be remembered that the poet had no more to gain than he was assured of by reason of a friendship already established; the Duke of Dorset was hardly a promising Maecenas; Walpole had already placed the poet under a weighty obligation; while of the Lady Elizabeth Germain nothing more can be urged than that she was a wealthy widow with a past.

While the satires were in course of separate publication—they were begun in 1725 and concluded in 1728—Young had become a pensioner of the crown. A year prior to the issuing of the first poem, Dodington had attached himself to Walpole and had been made a Lord of the Treasury. The latter honour was no doubt bestowed in recognition of his political importance, for some four or five members of the House of Commons were returned in his interests. Hence we need search no further for the instrument of the poet's preferment. From their earliest days at Oxford to the close of his long life, Dodington entertained a sincere regard for Young, and there can be no question that it was he and he alone who persuaded Walpole to award the poet a pension. The royal grant, which was dated the 3rd of May, 1726, set forth that it was the King's will and pleasure that "an annual pension of £200 be established and paid from Lady Day, 1725, unto Edward Young, Doctor of Laws," and that the said sum was to be disbursed in quarterly payments. As the pension was made retrospective, the poet could look forward to drawing a comfortable sum from the exchequer on the Lady Day of 1726.

Anticipation of that £200 must be his excuse for *The Instalment*, that poem of 1726 written in honour of Walpole's installation as Knight of the Garter in the late May of that year. With the ink hardly dry on the royal grant, what wonder that the poet scorned the assistance of the muse—"a Walpole is my theme"—or that he called upon all the mighty dead of the most noble order to arise from their graves to grace the "pomp of that distinguished day"? Young was in an ecstasy of thankfulness.

“ My breast, O Walpole, glows with grateful fire.  
The streams of royal bounty, turn'd by thee,  
Refresh the dry domains of poesy.”

Nor did he forget George I. As “ Brunswick’s smile ” had authorised his muse he realised that her conduct must be “ chaste,” for, he added, with delightful insouciance,

“ False praises are the whoredoms of the pen,  
Which prostitute fair fame to worthless men.”

Remembering his preference for horses and dogs, it seems probable that if Walpole ever read either *The Instalment* or the satire inscribed to him, he did so with his tongue in his cheek. The important matter for Young, however, was that a good round sum of £200 had been added to his fellowship income.

That increased revenue must have been a great relief. It has been seen that the Wharton pensions were at present unrealisable assets ; his income from his poems and tragedies was at the best spasmodic ; what he badly needed was such an assured addition to the proceeds of his fellowship as would enable him to meet those expenses of wardrobe, travelling, etc., incidental to his visits to such wealthy friends as Dodington. That he was in great need of money has already been inferred from that anxiety as to the success of *The Brothers* which he confessed to Lady Wortley Montagu several months before he received the royal pension.

So far as our evidence goes, it would appear that Young’s companionship was much sought after. He was a frequent guest of Dodington, either at his Eastbury country seat or in his house at Hammersmith. It was in the former mansion he made the acquaintance of Voltaire during that writer’s sojourn in England from 1726 to 1729, an experience which he recalled in inscribing one of his later poems to the distinguished Frenchman.

“ ‘ Tell me,’ say’st thou, ‘ who courts my smile ?  
What stranger stray’d from yonder isle ? ’  
No stranger, sir ! though born in foreign climes.

On Dorset downs, when Milton's page,  
 With Sin and Death, provoked thy rage,  
 Thy rage provoked who soothed with gentle rhymes?"

An anecdote in Spence is the best commentary on that verse. It seems that during that visit to Dodington on "Dorset downs" Voltaire, when Milton was under discussion, objected that that poet's "Death" and "Sin" were non-existents, whereupon Young retorted—

"Thou art so witty, profligate, and thin  
 At once we think thee Milton's Death and Sin."

It is obvious from Young's address to Voltaire that the debate waxed vigorous for a time, but that he at length extorted from his opponent the admission that "Milton's blindness lay not in his song." According to Spence, it was during this visit to Eastbury that Voltaire asked Young to correct one of his essays, and that on being presented with the results he laughed in his critic's face.

One other anecdote of these years has been preserved by Boswell. On a wild, stormy evening, when the poet was staying with Dodington at Hammersmith, he went out into the garden for a few minutes, and on his return was greeted by his host with the remark that it was a dreadful night. "No, Sir," rejoined Young, "it is a very fine night. The Lord is abroad!" That anticipation of Ruskin's dictum that there is no bad weather, taken in conjunction with his defence of Milton's theology, would seem to indicate that the poet's thoughts were turning at last towards his father's sacred profession.

## CHAPTER V

### HOLY ORDERS

1728-1741

PERSISTENT as was Young's ill luck in his choice of patrons, he was fortunate in deciding upon the time for changing his profession. The death of Queen Anne ushered in a new era for the *littérateur*; George I could hardly be expected to take an interest in books he could not read; and George II, in addition to his atrocious taste in art, so completely ignored *belles-lettres* as to have richly deserved the sarcasms of Pope and Swift. "Places in the Customs," observed Sir Leslie Stephen, "were no longer to be given to writers of plays or complimentary epistles in verse, or even to promising young politicians, but to members of parliament or the constituents in whom they were interested. The placemen, who were denounced as one of the great abuses of the time, were rewarded for voting power not for literary merit."<sup>1</sup> These statements relate, it is true, to a slightly earlier period, but they are indicative of a change which had hardened by the time Young adopted a new career.

Perhaps the poet's chief reason for deciding to enter the clerical profession was a desire for such a settled income as would enable him to establish a home of his own. His anxiety for the success of *The Brothers* has been attributed to financial needs; even when that misgiving was relieved by the grant of the royal pension, he must have been haunted by the uncertainty of that grant being renewed in the event of the King's death; at his age, too,—he was approaching his forty-third year—it was surely natural that he should wish to attain a position that would release him from monetary apprehensions. Not the worthiest of motives, this, for aspiring to the sacred responsibilities of the ministry; yet it may be urged in his

<sup>1</sup> *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 101.

excuse that such an impulse was regarded as blameless in his day, and that he had not offended against either religion or morality in any of his writings. Nay, *The Last Day* and *The Force of Religion* were such impressive sermons in verse that they would have done him honour had he been already ordained.

Exactly at what date he decided to reverse the satire of his own lines and abandon the classics for the Scripture, is unknown. It has been usual with his biographers to regard his appointment as a chaplain to the King in the April of 1728 as the earliest fixed landmark in his clerical career, but that is to ignore evidence which anticipates that appointment by nearly a year. The title-page of Young's first contribution to theology, *A Vindication of Providence*, states that it was preached in St. George's Church, Hanover Square, "soon after the last King's death." This takes us back to the summer of 1727, for George I died in the June of that year. It is clear, then, that Young must have been ordained some months prior to his appointment as a royal chaplain. But that he had begun to read for holy orders in the early summer of the previous year is a natural conclusion from the statement that it was his resolve to enter the Church which decided him to withdraw *The Brothers* from rehearsal. To this period belongs the anecdote related by Owen Ruffhead as an example of Young's dependence on others. "When he had determined to go into orders, he addressed himself, like an honest man, for the best directions in the study of theology. But to whom did he apply? It may, perhaps, be thought, to Sherlock or Atterbury; to Burnet or Hare. No! to Mr. Pope, who, in a youthful frolic, recommended Thomas Aquinas to him. With this treasure he retired to an obscure place in the suburbs. His director hearing no more of him in six months, and apprehending that he might have carried the jest too far, sought after him, and found him out just in time to prevent an irretrievable derangement." It has been suggested that this picturesque anecdote is an example of how a joke may be transformed into a statement of fact; certainly a comparison



of the poetic output of the two men would indicate that even before he entered the Church Young knew a good deal more about theology than Pope.

Whatever the precise date of Young's ordination, we are on sure ground in thinking of him as a fully-fledged minister of the Church of England by the summer of 1727, for in addition to the statement on the title-page of *A Vindication of Providence*, quoted above, that treatise contains the remark: "We have lately lost our King." It appears, indeed, that it was the death of George I which suggested to Young his philosophical discourse on the text, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

In its printed form this lengthy sermon—it extends to some 25,000 words—was inscribed to Queen Caroline, who, in the preface, is described as "the great encourager of the arts." The address to her Majesty gives a brief outline of the author's purpose, which was to emulate Milton in justifying the ways of God to men. It was a false opinion, Young declared, to regard this world as a scene of misery; on the contrary, the divine Providence not only permitted, and enabled, but also enjoined men to be happy. Unfortunately, however, he did not complete his task. It is impossible to believe, without feeling intense sympathy for his hearers, that he delivered from St. George's pulpit the whole of the discourse as it was published; yet even the ample licence he allowed himself in the printed page did not suffice to exhaust more than the first half of his subject.

After a preliminary exegesis of his text, in which he made many epigrammatic points, such as "no man but wishes for heaven, while heaven is on his mind," he proceeded to examine the two rival claimants for human affections, namely, the "things above" and the "things on the earth," his first concern being to put the "world in the balance" and show how the various orders, aims, relations, tempers and passions of men were so many causes of unhappiness. He found that all men, no matter what their position, were discontented; and then ventured, as one illustration, on an exposition of

the married and celibate states, the second particular of which is deeply interesting as affording a picture of his own thoughts. He was speaking, it will be remembered, in the "maturity" of his own age, and from the bachelor's point of view.

"The married state only may be the most happy, but is the most dangerous; as fruitful of calamities as it is of relations; whose capacity of being our greatest pleasures is likewise their capacity of being our greatest pains. And, if we consult experience more than reason in this point, we have grounds to fear the worst. Nor is reason entirely on the other side; for, if there are more vices than virtues, more unfortunate than fortunate accidents in life, the balance, in this state, will probably turn against us. The good in it we look on as our due, and therefore receive it coldly, and without a proper emotion of heart; the bad is unexpected, and therefore keen the resentment of it. The shaft is sharp; the surprise dips it in poison, and doubles our anguish. Both parties look on all that the other can do for them as an absolute debt. This notion leaves both a much less power to oblige than to disgust, and, consequently, makes disquiets almost unavoidable.

"The state of celibacy, unless it can work out an artificial happiness from the absence of evils, which requires a peculiar strength of mind, is a desert, melancholy, and disconsolate state. At the maturity of life tender affections awake in the heart, which demand their proper objects, and pine for want of them. In this state of celibacy they must either be extinguished, or continued without gratification. The first is a great violence to nature; the second, her lasting pain; and a pain of that kind which furnished the Platonists with their principal idea of hell. Our paternal affections must be drawn off, like a mother's milk, or they will corrupt and turn to disease.

"Husband and father are the title of honour which nature dispenses, and endows them with greater pleasure than any titles which fortune can confer. They that resist the impulses

of nature are resisted by her in their new scheme of enjoyment ; and nature is a powerful adversary. He that has children multiplies himself, and gives happiness many channels by which to flow in upon him. Letting the heart stream out in tenderness on its proper objects, as it is the greatest duty, so it is the greatest blessing, of life. To have no one to whom we most heartily wish well, and for whom we are warmly concerned, is a deplorable state. It may be said, that wisdom will provide us with such objects in every condition. It may, but it would cost us less pains if we suffered nature to ease her of that trouble."

To follow the preacher through all the ramifications of his discourse is unnecessary. It is a typical example of seventeenth century morality, plus a concession to puritan homiletics in its construction, for the mind grows weary and bewildered with its multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions and sub-sub-divisions. Although he is arguing against pessimism, the effect of this truncated discourse is wholly gloomy. He marshalls into his pulpit those dowered with the pride of birth, the sons of genius, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, and finds them all alike objects of compassion for their indigenous unhappiness. He checks off the passions of humanity, anger and love, fear and shame, envy and compassion, indignation and emulation, and hope and joy, and each is indicted for contributing to human misery. The discourse, in short, is an impeachment of the scheme of life founded upon the senses, and reaches a conclusion worthy of Ecclesiastes.

"If this account is just, as I think it is, what is human happiness? A word, a notion, a day-dream, a wish, a sigh, a theme to be talked of, a mark to be shot at, but never hit, a picture in the head, and a pang in the heart of man! Wisdom recommends it gravely, learning talks of it pompously, our understanding listens to it eagerly, our affection pursues it warmly, and our experience despairs of it irretrievably.

Imagination persuades some that they have found it, but it is while their reason is asleep; pride prevails with others to boast of it; but it is only a boast, by which they may deceive their neighbours, but not themselves; felicity of constitution, and sauvy of manners, make the nearest approach to it, but it is only an approach; fortune, the nature of things, the infirmities of the body, the passions of the mind, the dependence on others, the prevalence of vice, the very condition of uncorrected humanity forbids an embrace. Wine, beauty, music, pomp, study, diversion, business, wisdom, all that sea or land, nature or art, labour or rest, can bestow, are but poor expedients to heave off the insupportable load of an hour from the heart of man; the load of an hour from the heir of an eternity!"

By reason of the incompleteness of his *Vindication*, a vindication which does not vindicate, Young has been reprimanded for his unrelieved picture of human life. He certainly failed to fulfil the promise of his address to the Queen; yet the hints he gives of the line he intended pursuing in dealing with the "things above" are sufficient to show that he would have made an equally effective argument in favour of spiritual pleasures. As it was, the *Vindication of Providence* achieved remarkable popularity for so serious a discourse, five editions being called for in less than a decade.

Eloquently as Young described the evils of ambition, quoting to enforce his moral the text, "Seek not of the Lord pre-eminence, neither of the King in the seat of honour," he was persistent in his attempts to attract royal attention, for in addition to dedicating his *Vindication* to Queen Caroline he in the same year, 1728, prefaced his *Ocean* with an *Ode to the King*. Neither of these odes adds to his poetic reputation; nor is he seen at his best in the essay *On Lyric Poetry* by which they are accompanied. That he could recognise a good ode when he read one is obvious from his high praise of Dryden's *St. Cecilia's Day*; but *Ocean* is an unanswerable proof that he could not write one. Judged by his own canons, that the

thoughts of an ode should be "uncommon" and "sublime," and its conduct "rapturous," the only possible verdict on this production must be entirely adverse.

Perhaps, however, these loyal attentions to the throne may have had something to do with his appointment as one of the King's chaplains and with the continuance of his pension. Dodington, too, was still in friendly relations with Walpole, a fact which was all to Young's advantage whether as a poet or a clergyman. Yet it may be doubted if his royal chaplaincy was an unmixed pleasure. He was, Seward says, so "much in earnest in whatever he was doing, that preaching one day at the Chapel Royal before George II, and observing him extremely inattentive, he raised his voice very much; and finding that ineffectual, he burst into tears."

In the January of the following year he was invited to discourse before an audience which probably gave him closer attention, he being chosen as the special preacher before the House of Commons in St. Margaret's Church on the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. This *Apology for Princes*, based on the words "Honour the King," was a vigorous protest against the party spirit of the day and an exposition of the dignity of good princes and the duties of loyal subjects. The moral inculcated was that kings and kingdoms perished and were forgotten if they were controlled by selfishness. Virtue only was eternal.

"Where is Athens? Where is Carthage? Where is Rome? The seat of science is darkened; the regent of the seas is sunk; the conqueror of the world is nothing. Their glories are gone; they are passed by, as a bubble on a stream, or the thought of a drunken man, as a post, or a shadow by day, as a watch or a vision by night: though their cities were of marble, their mighty monuments of brass; though the mountains fell, and the rivers flowed, as they bid them; though their roots struck deep in the earth, and their heads rose high in heaven. Of what was once all, now nothing remains, but what virtue has preserved: illustrious names!

that lay death under foot, and take hold of immortality. Nothing is there which the strength or art of man can acquire, except virtue, but is fugitive as air, and evanid as a vapour."

But a royal chaplaincy and invitations to preach before the House of Commons were barren honours. Thus far his adoption of the clerical profession had not resulted in any material profit. He was a pastor without a flock, a clergyman without a benefice. It was at this juncture, it would seem, that, in perplexity as to whom to approach next, he appealed to the King's mistress. His letter to Mrs. Howard must precede any comment on the difficulties it raises.

"Madam,—I know his Majesty's goodness to his servants, and his love of justice in general, so well, that I am confident if his Majesty knew my case, I should not have any cause to despair of his gracious favour to me.

"Abilities.

"Good manners.

"Service.

"Age.

"Want.

"Suffering  
and  
Zeal } for his Majesty.

"These, Madam, are the proper points of consideration in the person that humbly hopes his Majesty's favour.

"As to Abilities, all I can presume to say, is that I have done the best I could to improve them.

"As to Good Manners, I desire no favour, if any just objection lies against them.

"As to Service, I have been near seven years in his Majesty's, and never omitted any duty in it. Which few can say.

"As for Age, I am turned of fifty.

"As for Want, I have no manner of preferment.

"As for Sufferings, I have lost £300 per annum by being in his Majesty's service, as I have shown in a representation,

which his Majesty has been so good as to read and consider.

“As for Zeal, I have written nothing without showing my duty to their Majesties, and some pieces are dedicated to them.

“This, Madam, is the short and true state of my case. They that make their court to the ministers, and not their Majesties, succeed better. If my case deserves some consideration, and you can serve me in it, I humbly hope and believe you will. I shall therefore trouble you no farther, but beg leave to subscribe myself with truest respect and gratitude,

“Madam,

“Your most obliged and most obedient

“Humble servant,

“EDWARD YOUNG.

“Madam, I have some hope that my Lord Townshend is my friend; if therefore soon, and before he leaves the court, you had any opportunity of mentioning me with that favour you have ever been so good as to shew, I think it would not fail of success; and if not I shall owe you more than any.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Young did not date this letter, it is possible to establish within a few months the period when it was written. As Mrs. Howard became the Countess of Suffolk in the June of 1731 it must have been penned prior to that change in her title, while the reference in the postscript to Lord Townshend is a proof that he was still in office, which, however, he resigned in the May of 1730. But inasmuch as the postscript suggests that Lord Townshend might soon be leaving the court, the probabilities are that Young wrote at the time when that peer was intriguing for the downfall of Walpole. The letter, then, belongs either to the close of 1729 or the beginning of the following year.

But its inherent problems are more insoluble than its date.

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 22626, f. 117.

That Young always thought he was older than he was explains why he described himself as "turned of fifty" when, at the utmost, he had not completed his forty-seventh year; and his assertion that he had "no manner of preferment" is explicable as relating to his clerical career; but what he meant by saying he had been seven years in the King's service, and had lost £300 a year by that service, admits of no satisfactory explanation.

Ere the year 1729 ended the royal chaplain was provided with another opportunity of courting the goodwill of George II. His *Ocean* had been prompted by the King's reference to the navy in his speech at the opening of parliament; his *Imperium Pelagi*, a "naval lyric written in imitation of Pindar's spirit," the lyric of which was entitled *The Merchant*, was inspired by the return of the sovereign from those negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of Seville. Young indeed had much of the journalistic instinct for making "copy" out of current events, with the additional astuteness of enlisting them in the service of his own ambition. As George II disliked "boetry" as much as he detested "bainting," the imitation of Pindar may have passed with him for an inspired poem; the admirer of Young will wish he had never heard of Pindar. According to his climax, his object was the glorification of British trade, and his lyric may be regarded as an anticipatory excuse for Napoleon's gibe about the "nation of shopkeepers."

But his poetic gifts had not deserted him. Odes and lyrics written to catch preferment on the wing only proved how poor a laureate he would have made; when he returned to his heroic couplets and to the world of the "Wits" and the coffee-houses he approved himself a genuine poet once more. Such a return he made in the first half of 1730 in his *Two Epistles to Mr. Pope*. These were Young's contribution to the warfare enkindled by the *Dunciad*, and it is significant of the steadfastness of his friendship that he praises not only Pope but also the absent Swift and the dead Addison. In the first of these lively poems "concerning the authors of the age" there is a stirring picture of the commotion caused by Pope's



satire—"pamphlets stun the streets, and load the stall"—followed by a glowing eulogy of the author of the tumult.

"Pope! if like mine, or Codrus, were thy style,  
 The blood of vipers had not stain'd thy file;  
 Merit less solid, less despite had bred;  
 They had not bit, and then they had not bled.  
 Fame is a public mistress none enjoys  
 But, more or less, his rival's peace destroys;  
 With fame, in just proportion, envy grows;  
 The man that makes a character makes foes;  
 Slight, peevish insects round a genius rise,  
 As a bright day awakes the world of flies;  
 With hearty malice, but with feeble wing,  
 (To show they live) they flutter, and they sting:  
 But as by depredations wasps proclaim  
 The fairest fruit, so these the fairest fame."

Pope must have rejoiced at the hearty manner in which Young ranged himself on his side, for his ally did not scruple to censure all the "motley train" of the "black militia of the pen." He was specially severe on the inexcusable reasons which prompted so many to rush into print.

"What glorious motives urge our authors on,  
 Thus to undo, and thus to be undone?  
 One loses his estate, and down he sits,  
 To show (in vain!) he still retains his wits:  
 Another marries, and his dear proves keen;  
 He writes as an hypnotic for the spleen:  
 Some write, confin'd by physic; some, by debt;  
 Some, for 'tis Sunday; some, because 'tis wet;  
 Through private pique some do the public right,  
 And love their king and country out of spite:  
 Another writes because his father writ,  
 And proves himself a bastard by his wit.

Has Lico learning, humour, thought profound?  
 Neither: why write then? He wants twenty pound:  
 His belly, not his brains, this impulse give;  
 He'll grow immortal; for he cannot live:  
 He rubs his awful front, and takes his ream,  
 With no provision made, but of his theme;  
 Perhaps a title has his fancy smit,  
 Or a quaint motto, which he thinks has wit:

He writes, in inspiration puts his trust,  
 Tho' wrong his thoughts, the gods will make them just;  
 Genius directly from the gods descends,  
 And who by labour would distrust his friends?  
 Thus having reason'd with consummate skill,  
 In immortality he dips his quill:  
 And since blank paper is denied the press,  
 He mingles the whole alphabet by guess:  
 In various sets, which various words compose,  
 Of which, he hopes, mankind the meaning knows.  
 So sounds spontaneous from the sibyl broke,  
 Dark to herself the wonders which she spoke;  
 The priests found out the meaning, if they could;  
 And nations star'd at what none understood."

There was one notable difference between Young's *Epistles* and Pope's *Dunciad*, for whereas the latter pilloried individuals, the former, as in the same author's satires, dealt only in types. It may have been that the initiated of the age could guess who were meant by Young's Codrus and Lico and Clodio, but the average reader of the eighteenth century would be as much in the dark as his successor of the twentieth century. One consequence of this difference in method is that the character of the virgin author has no chronological limitation.

"A virgin author, recent from the press,  
 The sheets yet wet, applauds his great success;  
 Surveys them, reads them, takes their charms to bed,  
 Those in his hand, and glory in his head;  
 'Tis joy too great; a fever of delight!  
 His heart beats thick, nor close his eyes all night:  
 But rising the next morn to clasp his fame,  
 He finds that without sleeping he could dream:  
 So sparks, they say, take goddesses to bed,  
 And find next day the devil in their stead."

Nor did the eighteenth century enjoy any monopoly of the kind of writer described in this witty metaphor:

"These labouring wits, like paviours, mend our ways,  
 With heavy, huge, repeated, flat, essays;  
 Ram their coarse nonsense down, though ne'er so dull;  
 And hem at every thump upon your skull."

In the second of these *Epistles*, which was headed, be it noted, "From Oxford," Young was more concerned with the theory than the practice of writing. He asked Pope's indulgence for offering some "needful precepts how to write, and live," premising, as though mindful of his new profession, that

"Serious should be an author's final views ;  
Who write for pure amusement, ne'er amuse."

All through the poem, indeed, the thought of his new vocation is never far away. He lectures presumptive authors with the sobriety of a professor in holy orders. Few deserved to aspire to the title of author, and certainly none who had not pledged themselves to "virtue's cause." What models did they intend forming themselves on? The "laurell'd dead"? That was well; but let them remember that—

"Fontaine and Chaucer, dying, wish'd unwrote,  
The sprightliest efforts of their wanton thought :  
Sidney and Waller, brightest sons of fame,  
Condemn the charm of ages to the flame :  
And in one point is all true wisdom cast,  
To think that early we must think at last."

If mere fame was a snare, how much more was the thirst of gold.

"In prose 'tis blameable, in verse 'tis worse,  
Provokes the muse, extorts Apollo's curse :  
His sacred influence never should be sold ;  
'Tis arrant simony to sing for gold :  
'Tis immortality should fire your mind ;  
Scorn a less paymaster than all mankind."

In short, the only worthy motive was virtue.

Having decided upon the right motive, Young proceeded to lay down the canons of good writing. As to the atmosphere of the whole, a constant straining after mere wit was to be deplored; and, above all, whatever was written should be condensed and polished with the utmost care.

" Write, and re-write, blot out, and write again,  
 And for its swiftness ne'er applaud your pen.  
 Leave to the jockeys that Newmarket praise ;  
 Slow runs the Pegasus that wins the bays.  
 Much time for immortality to pay,  
 Is just and wise ; for less is thrown away.  
 Time only can mature the labouring brain ;  
 Time is the father, and the midwife pain :  
 The same good sense that makes a man excel,  
 Still makes him doubt he ne'er has written well.  
 Downright impossibilities they seek ;  
 What man can be immortal in a week ? "

In warning against an undue preference for satire he gave the theory of his own practice.

" If satire charms, strike faults, but spare the man :  
 'Tis dull to be as witty as you can.  
 Satire recoils whenever charg'd too high ;  
 Round your own fame the fatal splinters fly.  
 As the soft plume gives swiftness to the dart,  
 Good breeding sends the satire to the heart."

And the sum of his poetic discourse insisted once more upon a theory of authorship which was in perfect harmony with his new profession as a minister of religion.

" Weighty the subject, cogent the discourse,  
 Clear be the style, the very sound of force ;  
 Easy the conduct, simple the design,  
 Striking the moral, and the soul divine :  
 Let nature art, and judgment wit, exceed ;  
 O'er learning reason reign ; o'er that, your creed :  
 Thus virtue's seeds, at once, and laurel's, grow ;  
 Do thus, and rise a Pope, or a Despreau :  
 And when your genius exquisitely shines,  
 Live up to the full lustre of your lines :  
 Parts but expose those men who virtue quit ;  
 A fallen angel is a fallen wit ;  
 And they plead Lucifer's detested cause,  
 Who for bare talents challenge our applause.  
 Would you restore just honours to the pen ?  
 From able writers rise to worthy men."

That Young addressed the second of these *Epistles* " From

Oxford" is significant. The tradition which credits him with writing at least one of his tragedies at Dodington's Eastbury mansion is no doubt credible; but it is equally probable that most of his composition was done in his fellowship chambers at All Souls, Oxford. Those rooms were his only permanent home. But now, in this summer of 1730, he had come to take farewell of the apartments he had occupied for twenty-two years. He had received a benefice at last. Not through Mrs. Howard's good offices, or by the influence of Dodington, but by the favour of the Warden and Fellows of his own college, who, in the July of that year, presented him to the rectory of Welwyn in Hertfordshire.

Welwyn was to be his home for the remaining thirty-five years of his life. A pleasant country town of some 1,200 inhabitants, situated on the great north road from London to York and so in the direct route of the most frequented highway of the kingdom, and within 22 miles of the capital, this was an ideal home for one who, like Young, combined a meditative spirit with a social temperament. The income of £300 a year, too, would relieve him from all financial anxiety.

But something was still wanting to complete his happiness. Nearly three years had passed since, from the pulpit of St. George's Church, he had expatiated upon the advantages and disadvantages of the married and celibate states, and had concluded that the latter was the most wanting because it was deplorable not to have a companion "for whom we are warmly concerned." He had become conscious of his own need of some one to whom he could let his heart "stream-out in tenderness." The passing of three more years had deepened that need, yet it was not until the 27th of May, 1731, that it was at length satisfied.

As by that date Young was approaching his forty-eighth year it is not surprising that he should have taken a widow for his wife. From a worldly point of view, however, he made an excellent match, his bride being Lady Elizabeth Lee, a younger daughter of Edward Henry Lee, first Earl of Lichfield, the relict of her cousin, Colonel Francis Lee. It has escaped

the notice of all the poet's biographers that his wife was of royal descent, for her mother was Lady Charlotte Fitzroy, the youngest of Charles II's natural daughters by Barbara Villiers. Lady Charlotte was betrothed to the Earl of Lichfield in her tenth and married in her thirteenth year, and, dying in 1718, was distinguished for her "blameless" beauty and her numerous progeny. As Lady Elizabeth came nearly last on her list of daughters, she was probably about thirty-five years old when she became the wife of the rector of Welwyn. Beyond these facts Young's wife is not much more than a name. We know that she had three children by her first husband, a son and two daughters; that she bore the poet a son; that she worked an elaborate altar-cloth for her husband's church; that she died in the January of 1741, and was one of the inspiring causes of the *Night Thoughts*; but whether she perpetuated her mother's "blameless" beauty, whether she were fair or dark or short or tall, or what her character was, we shall never know. Save in one of his letters, in which he speaks of "Lady Betty" as sending her "compliments," she makes no appearance in Young's correspondence, nor did he choose her for the theme of a single poem. The only anecdote of his married life is one adopted by Dr. Doran, in whose words it may be repeated. "He was once walking in his garden at Welwyn, with Lady Betty and another lady on either side of him, when a servant summoned him into the house, where a gentleman was waiting to see him. The poet showed little inclination to go; whereon the ladies insisted, and led him, each taking a hand, to his garden-gate. As he turned from them, he is said to have made the following impromptu—

' Thus Adam look'd, when from the garden driven;  
 And thus disputed orders sent from Heaven.  
 Like him I go, and yet to go am loath;  
 Like him I go, for angels drove us both.  
 Hard was his fate, but mine still more unkind:  
 His Eve went with him; but mine stays behind.'

That story leaves a pleasant impression; and for the rest we



*From an old engraving*

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may take refuge in the reflection that perhaps this was a case where the lack of history may be interpreted as a proof of unruffled domestic felicity.

During the decade following his marriage Young's muse, save for the unimportant *Foreign Address*, was quiescent. For the greater part of this period, too, there is a remarkable dearth of correspondence. His new duties as rector of Welwyn doubtless occupied much of his time, and for his leisure hours he had the companionship of his wife and her young family, which was increased by the advent of Young's own son in the June of 1732. There are many evidences that the poet was warmly attached to his step-children, the two girls, Elizabeth and Caroline, and their brother; and proofs will be cited later that he was not so wanting in fatherly affection for his own son as Croft insinuated. At the date of that son's birth the poet's most influential friend, Bubb Dodington, was on intimate terms with the Prince of Wales, a fact which accounts for the latter honouring the rector of Welwyn by standing as godfather to his boy, to whom, consequently, the name of Frederick was given. This association of Young, through Dodington, with the Prince of Wales and his rival court, was destined to prove an insurmountable obstacle to his preferment in the Church.

Four years after the poet's marriage there came a break in the happy family circle at Welwyn, for in the June of 1735 Lady Elizabeth's eldest daughter was given in marriage to Henry Temple, the eldest son of the first Viscount Palmerston. Elizabeth Temple's wedded life, however, was of brief duration. She and her sister and brother appear to have been of delicate constitution, for neither of them attained any considerable age. In the autumn following her marriage Mrs. Temple had so far declined in health as to render her wintering in a milder climate imperative, but the journey to Nice, her prospective destination, was never completed, for she died at Lyons in the October of 1736 while still in her eighteenth year.<sup>1</sup> This was the bereavement which is thought to have

<sup>1</sup> The record of Mrs. Temple's death is preserved in the archives

inspired that passage in the third of the *Night Thoughts* in which Young paints a pathetic picture of Narcissa having been, because a Protestant, denied burial in a French town, but that problem of his biography and poetry must be reserved for the succeeding chapter.

Reference has been made above to that letter which contains Young's solitary allusion to "Lady Betty"; it was in the second of two epistles addressed to a John Williams which were brought to light by the industry of James Nichols when he annotated a complete edition of the poet's works. At the time the letters were written, 1739, Mr. Williams was travelling on the Continent, probably as the tutor of a young peer, and took advantage of his leisure to resume an interrupted correspondence with the poet. Young seems to have welcomed the renewal of the friendship, and promptly supplied the inquirer with the latest literary news of the day. Both the letters were written from Welwyn, the first being dated the 23rd of February, 1739.

"Nothing can be more kind than the continuance of your friendship; nothing more unjust than your suspicion of my backwardness to embrace it. I esteem you for yourself, and the good company you keep. Homer was a very honest gentleman, who talked of many gods, and believed but one. Horace says, *Quanto tibi negaveris, a diis plura ferēs*. Fenelon was half an angel; and Newton looked so far and clearly into Nature, that he found himself under the necessity to clap a God at the head of it, in order to render any thing accountable. As to Voltaire, he is content with the contemplation of his own parts, without looking for any other immortality than they shall give him.

of the Hôtel de Ville at Lyons: "Mad. Elizabeth Lee, fille du Colonel Lee, âgée d'environ dix-huit ans, a été enhumée a l'Hôtel de Dieu de Lyon, dans le cimetièrre de messieurs de la religion prétendue Réforme de la nation suisse, le dixième Oct. 1736, sur les onze heures du soir, par ordre de M. le Prévot des Marchands. Reçu 729 livres 12 sols. Signé, Para, prêtre économc." *Notes and Queries*, 4th S. viii, 485.

“ Thus, sir, my sermon ends. But why this sermon? To show myself qualified for the deanery or mitre you so kindly wish me. But these things are long in coming. If in your travels you should pick up a little vacant principality, it would do as well; I am as qualified for it, and as likely to succeed in it. Monaco would be a pretty sinecure; for, as I take it, the most Christian king is so good as to do all the duty. I have brought you to the borders of Italy; I heartily wish you pleasure in the land of Kantys. But before that I hope to be censured by you in another letter, which would give me great satisfaction.

“ You inquire after writers. Here is a libel published, called *Manners*, for which the author is fled, and the minister has been reprimanded: there are two or three things well enough said in it to balance a deal of gross abuse. The last publication I have read was about suicide, in which the author endeavours to persuade an Englishman not to hang himself when the wind is N.E. *Mustapha*, a new tragedy, is treading the stage with some applause. Nothing shoots in abundance this spring but divinity; a forward plant like the snow-drop, but of little flavour. I desire you to re-enter me into your little list of friends.”

It is significant of Young's continued attachment to the party of the Prince of Wales, whose enmity to his father, George II, had by this date become the scandal of the nation, that two of his three items of literary news should relate to the compositions of the prince's adherents. *Manners* was, of course, that satire by Paul Whitehead which occasioned a debate in the House of Lords, the upshot of which was that poet and publisher were summoned to the bar of that house, an ordeal which the poet escaped by flight. The new tragedy, *Mustapha*, by David Mallet, was produced at Drury Lane on the 13th of February, and greatly delighted the friends of the Prince of Wales by its covert satires of the King and Sir Robert Walpole.

Young's second letter to Mr. Williams, dated the 25th of November, 1739, is so unusually reminiscent for him that the reader will wish more of the same correspondence had been preserved. The addressee had reached Nice when the letter was written.

“Letters from the dead are so entertaining, that many wits have lied their friends out of hell so agreeably, that mankind has forgiven the imposition, for the sake of the pleasure.

“Next to letters from the dead, are those from the living at a great distance, and, in some sense, inhabitants of another world. But, as far as I can learn from your letter, that other world I mean is itself dead since I was there, at least much out of order. Poor sun! give him a glass of your pupil's October, to cure his November dumps; it will make him gay, and dance as in our *Rehearsal*; but leave a glass for his holiness the Pope; and, that it may go down with him the better, you may let him know it is prescribed by the Council of Nice. When I was there, I contracted a great intimacy with the Mediterranean. Every day I made him a solemn visit. He roared very agreeably. I hope our men of war will soon learn his art, for the entertainment of his Spanish Majesty; this is a kind of opera that will receive no improvement from the loss of manhood. If here you are at a loss for my meaning (for I think I am a little obscure), consult Mr. Patterson's little wife; she will let you into the secret; for I am mistaken, or our friend P. has taught her to look on all eunuchs with high disdain, and to detest music for the execrable damage it has done the whole sex.

“If you visit my *quondam* habitation, you will pass a solemn assembly of cypresses; I have great regard for their memory and welfare; they took up my quarrel against the sun, and often defended me from his insults, when he was much more furious than you now represent him. You are so kind as often to remember me with Mr. P. When you drink my health, regard your own. I would have you *eat my*

health, and I will *drink* yours ; the north wants spirits ; and the south flesh ; but take care you get not more than your own. There is great plenty in Italian markets, and it comes cheap ; if anything can be called cheap which may possibly cost a whole Roman nose. I hope you have nothing of Rome about you but that noble feature ; if you have, post away to his Holiness. No man makes more Protestants than the Pope, or more saints than the devil, when either of them is thoroughly known ; for truth and virtue have no better friends upon earth than a near inspection and intimate acquaintance with the deformity and madness of their opposites.

“ This, dear sir, comes of your conversing with parsons ; I forgot I was writing a letter, and was providing myself for next Sunday with a sermon against drinking, wenching, etc., etc. Pardon a friend’s infirmity, and manfully bear your own calamity. May this be the greatest you meet with in your travels, and then you need not be in haste to return to your farm in Wales ! My best wishes and services to Mr. P. Lady Betty sends her compliments to you and Mr. P.”

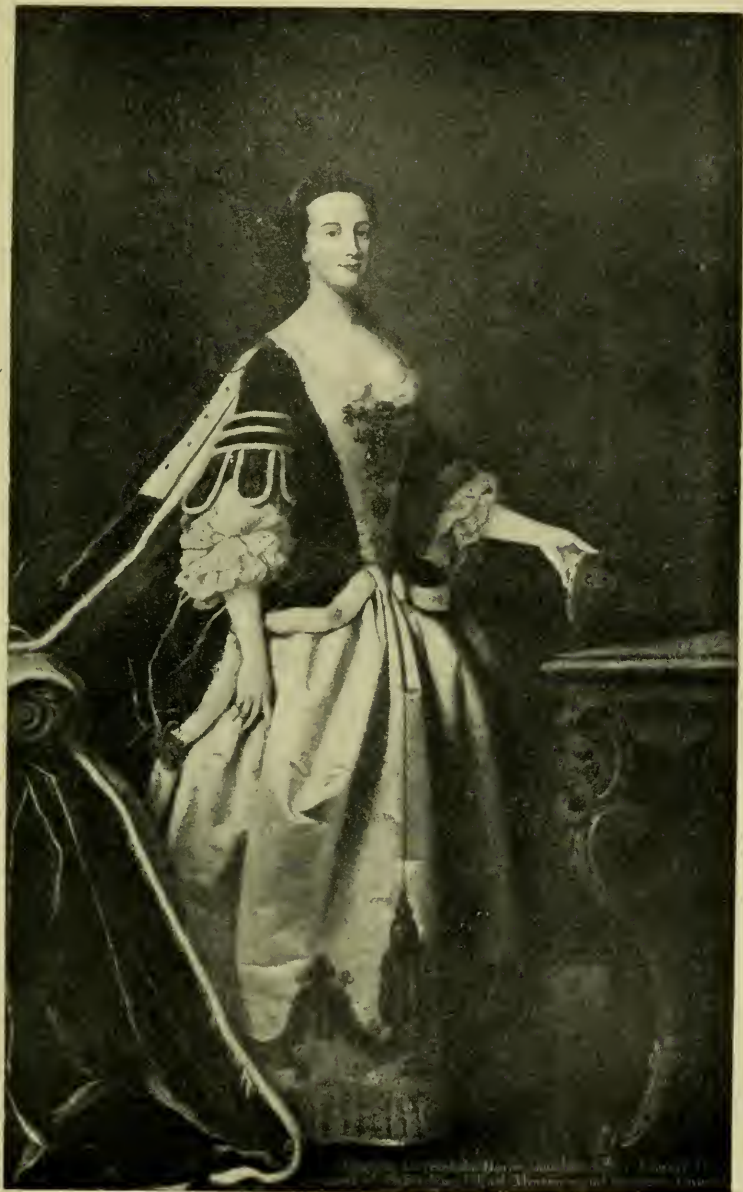
In the following month Young began a brief correspondence with a more notorious character, none other, in fact, than the questionable Edmund Curll, that eighteenth century vendor of obscene or pirated books who was so often in prison or the pillory. In keeping with that stroke of hypocrisy which prompted the use of the Bible as a sign for his shop, Curll had a penchant for establishing relations with dignitaries of the Church, as though such associations would leaven his un-savoury publications. Looking around in 1739 for decent works to reprint, his choice alighted on Young’s now numerous pieces, most of which, owing to the Act of 1710, were the prey of any pirate. Curll was astute enough, however, to interest the author in his design. He had tried a similar trick on the Bishop of London, to whom he forwarded an interleaved copy of Rochester’s *Poems*, with the request that his lordship

would revise the text in accordance with his views of morality. The bishop, however, was not to be caught ; he foresaw that if he complied the book would be published as " approved " by him. No such question of securing clerical authority for immoral verses was in Curll's mind in approaching Young ; all he was anxious to obtain was the imprimatur of the author.

And by perseverance he succeeded. The progress of the negotiations may be divined from three brief notes in the poet's handwriting. In the first, written on the 7th of December, 1739, Young merely made a suggestion : " I received the favour of yours, and have nothing more to say than this : you seem in the collection you propose to have omitted what I think may claim the first place in it ; I mean a translation from part of Job, printed by Mr. Tonson." The second note, eleven days later, was even briefer, but was a firm refusal of Curll's invitation to edit his own works : " Be assured I bear you no ill-will. I heartily wish you success in the undertaking ; but I am at present not at leisure to review what I formerly writ." More than six months elapsed ere the persistent bookseller wrote again, this time for a portrait. " I have no picture," Young replied, " or it should be at your service. Nor have I the *Epistle to Lord Lansdowne*. But if you will take my advice, I would have you omit that, and the *Oration on Colonel Codrington* : I think your collection will sell better without them. I wish you success."<sup>1</sup> This was sufficient for Curll. He duly advertised his edition of *Dr. Young's Pieces* as " made by his approbation and under his own direction." If he failed with the bishop he succeeded with the rector.

Two of the notes just quoted were addressed from Welwyn ; the third was written at Tunbridge Wells on the 4th of August, 1740. That place and date bring us to the commencement of the most considerable bulk of Young's correspondence—a correspondence with the Duchess of Portland which continued to within a month of his death.

<sup>1</sup> *Bod. MS. Rawl. Letters*, 90.



MARGARET DUCHESS OF PORTLAND

By THOMAS HUDSON

From the portrait at Welbeck Abbey, reproduced by the kind permission  
of his Grace the Duke of Portland, K.G.





At the time when the letters begin Margaret Cavendish Harley was in her twenty-fifth summer, and had been married some six years to William Bentinck, the second Duke of Portland, who was reported to be "the handsomest man in England." From her father and grandfather, the first and second Earls of Oxford, the young duchess had inherited that love of the fine arts and kindly feeling towards men and women of letters which were her chief characteristics; from her earliest childhood she had revealed a temperament which had made her the idol of all who enjoyed her acquaintance. She had barely completed her first year when her grandfather referred to her as "our sweet Peggy"; in her third summer a sedate Oxford don described her as in "perfect health and wantonness" and as promising to be "an admirable coquette"; two years later she became the "noble, lovely, little Peggy" of Prior; Swift's hard spirit was melted by her beauty and the virtues she "discovered so early and abundantly"; another elderly admirer ejaculated, "She has my heart"; and countless references to her winning ways besprinkle the private correspondence of her father.

When and how Young made her acquaintance is not revealed; it may have been through his wife's relations; or, as is still more probable, perhaps the duchess herself made the first advances, prompted thereto by her admiration of his poetry. That she valued his friendship and revered his memory are natural conclusions from the frequency of her invitations to Bulstrode and the care with which she preserved his letters. When Sir Leslie Stephen wrote his notice of the poet the correspondence was not to be found in the Portland archives at Welbeck Abbey, the reason being that the duchess had presented it to her eldest daughter, through whose marriage with the Marquis of Bath it was transferred to the muniments of Longleat.

Doubtless a few of the earlier letters are still missing, for the first epistle shows that it had been preceded by at least one other missive. As observed above, the surviving correspondence begins with a note from Tunbridge Wells, whither

Young was in the habit of going to drink the waters. The date is August 25th, 1740.

“ I was extremely ill when I writ my last letter, and whether it was intelligible to your Grace I cannot tell. My fever has left me under great weakness, for which I am advised to drink these waters for a fortnight longer ; if it will be then convenient to your Grace to admit an invalid into so happy a society, I shall pay my duty at Bulstrode with the greatest pleasure. The inducements your Grace is pleased to mention are very great, but none is greater than the satisfaction I shall take in paying my thanks for the honour you have done to one so entirely unentitled to it. Madam, I rejoice that the little innocents enjoy that health which they cannot yet have possibly forfeited by their crimes ; the contrary of which is generally the sting of those that suffer in a more advanced age.

“ I beg my humble duty to his Grace, and my humble service to the lady that is with you ; nor must she take ill my liberty in doing so, for, whatever she may imagine, she is no stranger to me, which I shall explain when I see her.”<sup>1</sup>

By the “ little innocents ” Young, of course, referred to the three children of his correspondent, the ladies Elizabeth and Henrietta, and the infant lord William Bentinck, the eldest of whom had not completed her sixth year. Although he does not mention her name, it is clear from subsequent letters that the “ lady that is with you ” was Elizabeth Robinson, the future Mrs. Montagu of blue-stockings fame, who was now in her twentieth year and had maintained a correspondence and friendship with the Duchess of Portland from before her teens. Bulstrode, the scene of the “ happy society ” to which the poet was invited, was the favourite country seat of the duchess. Built in 1686 by the infamous Judge Jeffreys, the mansion did not appeal to Horace Walpole’s gothic taste. To that critic it was a “ melancholy monument of Dutch

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 254.

magnificence," though he admitted there was "a brave gallery of old pictures, and a chapel with two fine windows of modern painted-glass." Bulstrode, which is situated in the parish now known as Gerrard's Cross, was so completely rebuilt in 1870 that it bears no resemblance to the mansion to which Young made so many happy visits.

That her Grace of Portland renewed her invitation is clear from the poet's next letter, written from Tunbridge Wells on the 10th of September.

"I have the unhappy advantage of very sensibly condoling with your Grace on your present complaint, labouring under the same myself, from a violent cold, which the badness of the season has made here an almost universal complaint; the excessive rains have washed away all our company, all I mean that came for pleasure; they that came for health are still fishing for it in these waters; but the waters themselves now begin to be out of order, so that I fear I shall scarce find what I sought. But I hope your Grace's park may give what the wells deny me, for my physician tells me that steel and riding are my only cure."<sup>1</sup>

As "Lady Betty" was still living, it might be thought strange she was not included in the invitation to Bulstrode. Her health, however, was already so failing as to make travelling impossible. On concluding his visit to the duchess Young, ere returning to Welwyn, journeyed to Ditchley Park, the Oxfordshire home of his wife, from whence he wrote on the 13th of October to offer his thanks for his late hospitality.

"I thank your Grace for the late favours I received at Bulstrode; my health, I thank God, is much better than before, but whether it is owing to the air, or the conversation, I shall not take on me to determine.

"It is somewhat odd, Madam, that I should be better acquainted with Miss Robinson since I left her, but to

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 255.

unriddle, I have met a confident of one of her admirers, who tells me his wounded friend is in a very melancholy way; but as he is a soldier, he is determined to behave in character, and rather to fall than fly. Your friend, Madam, alone can tell whether 'tis advisable for him to make his will.

“ I hope, Madam, the little ones are as well as you wish them, and your Grace as well as you deserve to be.”<sup>1</sup>

Had George, Lord Lyttelton, been a soldier, it would have been easy to explain Young's reference to the wounded officer who had fallen a victim to Miss Robinson's charms, for that poet is well known to have been greatly enamoured of the lady; as that solution is ruled out by Lyttelton's more pacific profession, Miss Robinson's "melancholy" admirer must be numbered among that unnamed host of would-be husbands who were attracted by her beauty and wealth. That she could give him no encouragement is obvious from Young's reply to a letter from the duchess which he wrote from Welwyn on the 7th of November. The Mr. Hay of this epistle was either the chaplain at Bulstrode or the clergyman of the parish.

“ I am much obliged to your Grace for the honour of your letter, and still more for your desire of a reply. If your Grace designed only a compliment by it, you are fairly bit, for I am determined to think you sincere, and to value myself upon it accordingly.

“ As for Miss Robinson, I am as much surprised at her ignorance in the particular I mentioned, as I am at her knowledge in general; both, I am satisfied, are very extraordinary. However, I have taken the hint she gave about providing against accidents; and a friend has written to the gentleman at — that he should set his house in order with all convenient expedition.

“ I am heartily sorry for Mr. Hay, and hope this will find him perfectly recovered.

“ I am, Madam, much obliged to my Lord Oxford for his

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 255.

kind remembrance of me ; and as for the little ones, your Grace loves them, but I do more ; I consider children as the next order of beings to the blessed angels ; spotless innocence is next in place to perfect virtue, and I shall very shortly fly to their protection.”<sup>1</sup>

Ere the month ended Young was writing again to his titled correspondent, once more in answer to a letter from her, but this was merely a brief note from London with the delicate compliment that it was “ scarce a greater happiness than it was a reputation ” to be numbered among her Grace’s friends. The next month found him at home again, from whence, on the 20th of December, he dispatched a long epistle to Bulstrode. Several new characters are added to the correspondence by this letter—Mrs. Elstob, the Duchess of Kent, and Mrs. Pendarves. The first of these was that accomplished Anglo-Saxon scholar who became governess to the Duchess of Portland’s children in 1738 ; the second was the widow of “ little Kent ” and great-aunt of the Duke of Portland ; the third was the letter-writing Mary Granville, who was still in her widowhood as Mrs. Pendarves, and three years removed from that second marriage which was to give her the more familiar name of Mrs. Delany.

“ I have been above ten days at this place, where my memory is very troublesome to me, and my understanding is hard put to it to get the better of its severe impertinence. I am heartily sorry for Mrs. Elstob, and hope in God she will not add to the great number of touching admonitions Providence lately has been pleased to give me of my own mortality. But you, Madam, are her deputy ; how worthily are you employed ! It is being twice a parent to bring little machines into being, and then to inspire them with such an understanding as shall make them a blessing to others. How hard is it that a poor whore, who murders her child, shall be hanged, and a rich one, who neglects the education of her

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 255.

children, shall escape! The first, though she designs it not, makes an angel; the last makes a legion of devils, if particular Providence does not interpose.

“ I had, Madam, the honour of waiting upon the Duchess of Kent, who, in truth, for a duchess, is a very odd one; she has a noble ambition of being always in the right, and either her Grace studies propriety in all things, or she is so very fortunate, as, without aiming at it, exactly to hit the mark. What I have hinted, Madam, concerning duchesses in general, is nothing to your Grace; you are only a titular duchess, and have scarce a single qualification for it. Insomuch, that if you could find in your heart to scratch the coronet out of the corner of your handkerchief, you might easily pass for a lady of as sound mind and as good a heart as any in Christendom. As for Miss Robinson, her heart is hardened, and I find, by what she says, that she is determined, without any remorse, to carry her face along with her wherever she goes; but if that may seem altogether necessary, I humbly beseech her, sometimes at least, to leave her understanding behind. Many an honest gentleman, though born in Kent, has done it, even when the welfare of his country was depending. I am glad to hear Mrs. Pendarves is proud of her weaknesses; I shall now entertain some small hope that I may not entirely be out of her favour; but, Madam, since Mrs. Pendarves’s natural antipathy is re-enforced by her pride, as you love ingenuity, I beg you to keep some one corner in your house unviolated, lest the whole race of those admirable spinsters, who work without a wheel, may not entirely be destroyed. The flies must be very fond of Mrs. Pendarves for routing their grand enemies, but I am afraid she is not aware with whom she is entering into so strict an alliance, for Beelzebub, the learned say, is king of the flies; so that what I suspected before is now, I think, very plain, viz., that Mrs. Pendarves hates a spider worse than the Devil, which, I fear, with the fair is no uncommon case.

“ If, Madam, the gentlemen will not take it ill, that I put them in such company, I desire my humble service to them,

and particularly, please, Madam, to let my Lord Duke know that I have a true and grateful sense of the honour he does me by giving me a place in his remembrance. As for the little ones, he that knows them, and does not love them, is a monster, and I wish he was a monster with six or eight hairy legs crawling on Mrs. Pendarves's work, that she might justly wreak her full vengeance on him. But men in the shape of men let her spare, and set Miss Robinson such an example of humanity, as may incline her to spend the remainder of her days in a cloister, which is the sole expedient I can think of for her complying with it.

“ I had almost forgot to wish your Grace a happy Christmas, that is, to wish you would make others as happy as you can. For, believe me, Madam, ‘ they that are most social are most selfish ; and but by giving happiness to others, we cannot receive it ourselves.’ I desire your Grace to accept this maxim as a new year's gift ; for I never make but one a year, and this came into my head from asking how 'twas possible your Grace could be so merry, as you say you are, in such weather as this. Oh, that I was a salamander, and could live in flames, as poor Captain B—— has done for two years past ! and will she not relent ? I fear your friend loves her flesh over-roasted ; it may be wholesomer, but sure, ladies, it is more palatable with the gravy in it ; but I grant, meat without bread won't do.”<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the loss of the Duchess of Portland's letters to Young, it may be hazardous to conclude that she was set upon making a match between the poet and her friend, Mrs. Pendarves, yet the nature of Young's rejoinders to her letters may be adduced in support of such a theory. The epistles which follow are certainly open to the suspicion that the poet was not averse to a second marriage, and although one of them is tentatively dated in the January of 1741, the month of Lady Young's death, the probabilities are that they belong to a later period.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 256-7.

“ It is my duty to write, though perhaps it would be my prudence to forbear, for what shall I write? Yet I will obey your Grace, and disobey you at the same time, for pray what difference is there between not writing and writing nothing? Since your Grace has laid me under an obligation and a difficulty at the same time by your kind command, I will take my revenge by being as severe on your Grace’s letter as possibly I can. I am as ambitious to find faults in such a correspondent, as your friends, the natural philosophers, are to find spots in the sun: and I think I can do it effectually.

“ You say, Madam, the more knowledge I have of Mrs. Pendarves, the greater esteem I shall have for her. Madam, you are mistaken, my knowledge of her may increase, but I think my esteem for her cannot; at least I do not desire it should. Again you say, Madam, that she has all the perfections of your sex, but none of the weaknesses: this your Grace designs as an advantageous character of your friend; but how far is it from it! I wish she had a fault or two I could name, that she might be the more valuable. By perfection, Madam, in sublunary things we mean such qualities as render them most agreeable to our own purposes. Gold without alloy will not work; it is quite unfit for the mint, and I fear Mrs. Pendarves without a little more of the *mere mortal* in her, will hardly receive that impression I am willing to make.

“ Was admiration our only passion, the most shining excellencies would infallibly carry the day; but, Madam, there are other passions in the heart of man, and those more importunate. But what impudence is it in me to pretend to inform your Grace of what lies hid in the human heart! You have often dissected it with the most accurate discernment, and I know but one instance that can call your judgment in question, which is your Grace’s undeserved partiality to, Madam, your Grace’s most obliged, and most obedient, humble servant.

“ Notwithstanding my late reproof, your Grace cannot forbear dwelling on the praises of your friend; you say you are happy in her conversation. Had Pope been her admirer,



could he possibly have praised her more? Your Grace's endeavour to convince me of her worth is such another attempt as if you should strive to convince me of the truth of the Christian religion; both are equally unnecessary, and equally imply your distrust of judgment; but your Grace, like some other celebrated divines, will preach eternally on a text that needs no comment, and leave quite unexplained what is truly mysterious.

“For instance, why has your friend, in spite of several advantageous offers, devoted herself to the criminal selfishness of a single life, when she knows that it is her duty to diffuse happiness as much as possibly she can? Why has she been wedded to music, and the pencil, when she knows there is a harmony far beyond that of sounds; and when your Grace by example has convinced her, that there is a way of furnishing her apartments, without the expense of canvas, with a variety of beauties which a Kneller might be proud to reach? But this, Madam, is touching on too tender a point; I see your Grace is under a decent confusion, to find your friend's justly admired excellencies may be fairly turned to her reproach. Madam, I should not presume to take this liberty, had I not the greatest value for you both. How then can I see with patience one committing a great error, and the other flattering her in it? This must needs grieve any honest heart, which knows how many singular virtues you have, to be tarnished and dishonoured by this, single indeed, but heinous fault. Mend as fast as you can, and peradventure you may find pardon. Boldly, Madam, as I speak, I am well aware, that I have nothing but my age to recommend my advice. And, indeed, I shall be very glad if it can recommend that, for alas! there is nothing else that can possibly be recommended by it.

“To conclude this melancholy letter with the same intrepid integrity that runs through the whole, give me leave, Madam, to say, that as well as you love your friend, and she your Grace, as much as you are charmed with each other's conversation; if your friend cannot frame to herself the idea of any conversation which she could better like, she deserves

not the blessing of yours. To have a warm and elegant taste for every good thing but that which Nature designed for her chief repast is being, at best, an illustrious rebel to the schemes of Providence, which, though it may gain her the admiration of the weak, will make, on the discerning, but slight impressions in her favour.”<sup>1</sup>

To the same period as these letters belong several notes written by Young during visits to London occasioned by his legal difficulties in connection with the Wharton annuities and bond. On one of those sojourns in the capital the poet called upon Mrs. Pendarves, “but what followed,” he wrote, “stands candidate for a place among your Grace’s mysteries.” Then he added a postscript which made pointed allusion to that proficiency in paper flower-work and water-colour drawing for which Mrs. Pendarves was famous.

“But your Grace is a naturalist, I will therefore talk with you in your own way. What so flowery and fragrant as the woodbine! What so luxuriant and fruitful as the vine! How they ravish our senses! How they gladden the heart of man! How divinely they inspire! Such, Madam, is your sex; but then, as you are made exquisite like these, so like them, in compassion to poor mankind, you are made feeble too. You were both designed to give a tender twine around something stronger than yourselves. The vine and woodbine were not designed for celibacy, but to mingle their branches with the rough oak, or elm, obliging, and obliged, receiving succour while they confer the most perfect ornament and delight.

“Now, Madam, a lady of genius, that abounds in arts and accomplishments, she can agreeably employ every hour, by herself; she can stand alone; she is free from that weakness which lays other ladies under the natural necessity of an embrace; and being superior to her own sex, affects an independency on ours. I wish that this is not somewhat the case of your friend.

“If your Grace does me the honour of a line, you will assist

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 258-9.

me in this nice speculation. I should be glad for the sake of mankind to find myself mistaken about her, for really, Madam, if she is made only to be admired, I shall value her no more than an angel. And poor angels, your Grace knows, will meet with many powerful rivals in so wicked a world as this." <sup>1</sup>

Young's invitations from the Duchess of Portland were not restricted to Bulstrode visits; whenever her Grace was in town at her Whitehall mansion she was equally anxious to enjoy the pleasure of the poet's company. Sometimes he had to decline owing to immersion in legal affairs; money was "the devil," he exclaimed once, but it had never done him greater mischief than in preventing him from waiting upon her Grace; but in the spring of 1741 he took the liberty of inviting himself to Whitehall in a letter which forms an admirable prose supplement to his satires.

"On a review of your last, for I read your Grace's letters more than once, I find you complain that dullness and ill-nature prevail. I shall endeavour to cure you of that displeasure it seems to give you.

"If, Madam, we have no view in company but of being diverted, or improved, our disappointments will be great, but if we have a second view, that, I mean, of paying a decent regard to society, by free and frequent intercourse with it, a sense of discharging this duty will be like carrying our own stool with us into company, and make us sit easy in it, though ill-nature in the person of Mrs. — and dullness in the shape of Dr. —, sat, one on our right hand, and the other on our left.

"If this advice seems too severe, I'll try to go still further, and show how this great calamity may be turned into a perfect diversion, by the help of a little imagination in us. If then, Madam, Dr. — and Mrs. — should visit us, let us suppose ourselves in the theatre, and that the parts of an oaf and a

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 259-60.

vixen were represented before us, how then should we admire the wonderful talents of the performers, and swear every word, air and action, was acted to the life, and thus steal from a visit the best dramatic entertainment we ever saw, without the expense of a crown!

“ If this, Madam, seems as fantastical, as the former advice severe, I will try a third expedient, which is quite obvious and natural, and which everybody, I believe, makes use of more or less. I mean, let us make use of bad company as a foil to recommend the good. We may, I think, justly compare the dullness of the doctor to the flat insipidness of oil, and the ill-nature of the lady to the acrimony of vinegar. Now might not these, well beat together, make an excellent sauce for a Mrs. Pendarves, might they not give us a still higher relish for the charms of her conversation?

“ And now, Madam, does not your Grace think me bewitched, that I talk thus to one who could tell me this, and ten times more? Madam, I do it out of pure good husbandry; I pick your pocket in order to make you a treat; what I present to your perusal I steal from your example; while you, perhaps, Madam, looking on the behaviour I advise, like Eve, in your beloved Milton, looking into the lake, fancy you see an angel, nor know it is yourself.

“ And now, Madam, can you for your soul imagine for what end and purpose I have written this long letter? I have written, as most of our wits do, purely, Madam, for a dinner, and humbly beg that on Tuesday or Wednesday next, as suits your Grace best, I may be admitted to your table, there to make apology for the trouble I now give you. If Mrs. Pendarves was there, she would be so charitable as to help me out; but if she is there, I beg your Grace to remember that her conversation will go down without sauce, so that you need not be at the trouble of inviting either of the two cruets mentioned above. But that I may have the honour of being often in your thoughts, I beg that, for the future, whenever a cruet of either kind comes to visit you, you would be so good as to remember, Madam, your Grace’s most dutiful butler.

“ As, Madam, persons of the character we have been speaking of may be called cruets, so there are others, that may be called salvers, as they present us in conversation with all that is delicious to the most elegant taste. Will your Grace stand gossip to the cruets, or the salvers? If to the last, it will, I grant, be less trouble to you, but if to the first, your Grace will have the honour of being asked blessing by half the town. I beg, Madam, my respects to the salvers of your Grace’s acquaintance, and please to let the cruets know that, if they honour me with a visit, I shall provide a sideboard for them, that they may not come too forward in company, which they are very apt to do.”<sup>1</sup>

No event in the domestic history of Bulstrode, whether happy or sad, was allowed to pass without an appropriate letter from the poet. An occasion of each kind inspired his pen in the May and June of this year, the first being a christening in the family.

“ I beg your Grace to make my compliments to Lady Isabella, and pay her my congratulations on her conversion to Christianity, and please to let her know that, if she is as good a Christian threescore years hence, I will venture to promise her infinitely more admirers, and those worth having, than this world can afford her at fifteen, though she should prove the fairest of her race. Next to a fine person, a fine understanding, and a greatness of mind, are, generally, the two chief objects of human pride; now a fine understanding is an understanding of compass, that takes in all things in which we are much concerned, whether present or future, seen or unseen, in fashion or out; and a great mind is a mind that has power to comply with the dictates of this extensive view in spite of all temptations to the contrary.

“ Please, Madam, to let her Ladyship know, that, as she is just come into a world where there are very many inclined to impose upon strangers, I have taken the liberty, as I wish

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 260-1.

her well, to inform her of these particulars. And now I give her leave to be as proud as she pleases of a fine understanding, and a great mind, provided they are of the right sort. If her Ladyship says she does not perfectly understand me, as having not yet learnt our language, tell her I desire her to copy her mama, and then 'tis no matter whether she understands me or not." <sup>1</sup>

Two months later Young had to assume the *rôle* of comforter, for in the June of 1741 Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford, the virtuoso father of the Duchess of Portland, passed away. The poet's letter, dated the 12th of July, was doubtless regarded as a sufficient explanation of the delay in his condolence.

" Could I have administered any consolation to your Grace, and had forborne to do it, I then indeed had been quite inexcusable ; but I too well know that the first agonies of real sorrow have no ears, and that a man might as wisely talk with his friend in a fever, and desire his pulse to lie still, as to philosophise with a wounded heart. These, Madam, are the strokes of Heaven, nor will they be defeated of their effect, nor indeed is it for our interest that they should. Of God Almighty's manifold blessings to mankind His afflictions are the greatest ; they will make us wise, or nothing will. We cannot bear an uninterrupted prosperity prosperously ; we cannot bear it without being a little intoxicated with the delicious cup, which will make our virtue reel, if not fall. Hence an ancient said as wisely as wittily : ' No man is so unhappy as he who never knew affliction.' I therefore congratulate your Grace on what you suffer, nor let it sound cruel or harsh in your ear, for in this I am but a little beforehand with your own self ; for shortly you will bless God for this great calamity, and find that the best may be bettered by the kind discipline of Heaven. Heaven suffers nothing to happen to man but what is for his temporal or eternal welfare, and our fears have as much reason to praise God as our triumphs. In what a blessed situation are we then, Madam, under such

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 261.

a Being who does, who will do, who can do nothing but for our good! What passion in the heart of man is half so natural as the love of God, while man is in his right senses! We have no motives of love, but either the excellence of the thing itself, or its benefits to us, and in neither view has God any rival, or shadow of it. Now why is Divine love so natural to us? and why is it enjoined as the first and great command? Because, if this is complied with, a course of duty will be a course of delight; we shall have the same pleasure in it as a fine gentleman has in obeying the commands of a favourite mistress. Love carries the whole heart with it, and when our heart is engaged, among toils and difficulties we find ease and pleasure, and nothing is too hard for the great alacrity of our attempts.

“But is not love too familiar a passion from such insects towards the King and Father of all being? It seems to be so, but I beg your Grace, for the Bible is a pretty book, to review the Gospel for Whitsunday, and to see what a familiar intimacy by that tremendous Power is indulged to men. I never read it but with astonishment, nor is it possible for any one who reads it to suspect that any of His dispensations are really severe, who speaks to us in such language as the fondest father might make use of, and who will encourage no expectations in us, that shall not be far surpassed by the event.

“In a word, Madam, Heaven is as solicitous for our happiness here, as is consistent with its far kinder concern for our happiness hereafter, and our afflictions, which is saying much in their favour, plainly tell us we are immortal: were we not, we should be as free from cares, but then we should be as destitute of hopes, too, as the beasts that perish. May that Power who bindeth up the broken heart, and giveth medicine to heal its sickness, be for ever your Grace’s comfort and defence.”<sup>1</sup>

With the return of August the poet was at Tunbridge Wells again, but whatever the nature of his indisposition he did not allow it to interfere with his correspondence with the duchess.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 262-3.

The two letters written during that visit require little annotation, though it may be noted that the Mrs. Donellan of the second epistle was a friend of Mrs. Pendarves as well as the duchess, and that her sister was married to Dr. Robert Clayton, Bishop of Clogher. The Sir John Stanley of that letter was probably of Nether-Alderley, in Cheshire.

“ There are but two distempers, and those very different, that bring people to this place, either redundancy, or want of spirits. The first makes people mad, the last fools; the first, I observe in this place, like persons bit by the tarantula, dance immoderately, till the distemper flows off; the last, like poor Job’s friends, sit silent for seven days together, till the water gives them utterance. The virtue of the water is yet got no higher than my fingers’ ends, which enables me to write, but when it will arrive at my lips is uncertain; but when it does, I shall have the pleasure of conversing with your Grace’s friends, many of whom are here, but all my conversation with them hitherto has been carried on by signs only on my part, for sound to one in my state is too great an expense.

“ By this time your Grace begins to guess the reason why I left the town without taking leave: that was rude, but I should have been much ruder, had I attempted it. To have made your Grace a dumb visit would have been very unpolite, and at best, like Hamlet’s ghost, I should have been able to have spoke in dismal monosyllables only, and therefore I humbly hope your Grace will pardon me for not frightening you out of your wits, for I know no lady on earth that would have lost more by such an accident.”

“ Sir John Stanley, between the waters and a high relish of your Grace’s regard to him is so elevated, that he talks of dancing at the next ball. Mrs. Donellan, whom I have studied, I find to be of an excellent mind and heart; I had once thoughts of drawing so amiable a character at length, but I shall abridge it in one sentence which implies all. ‘ She is worthy to be your Grace’s friend.’ I am heartily sorry my



Lord Duke has been in such pain, but I hope by this time he is reaping the advantage of it, in a quicker relish of health. There are none here who have so distinguished themselves either by their wisdom or folly, as to contribute to your amusement by their history. Here is a great fortune, which is followed by a pack of noble beagles, but which shall be the happy dog no one yet can tell. I am much obliged to your Grace and to the Duke and Duchess of Leeds; when I recover my own country, I shall prevent the honour of their sending to me. I proposed writing a long letter, but your Grace is relieved from the execution of that design by the waters. I can neither stand, nor see, nor think, and if your Grace can read what I have already written, his Majesty's affairs, at this critical juncture, need not be at a stand for want of a decipherer." <sup>1</sup>

Young's previous visit to Bulstrode had left so gracious a memory that the duchess was evidently anxious for a repetition of the pleasure, and the renewed invitation must have been expressed in exceptionally flattering terms to have prompted the amusing first paragraph of his reply of the 17th of September, 1741. A part of the inducement seems to have been an intimation that he would have the pleasure of meeting the Countess of Peterborough, though her Grace of Portland appears to have been dubious how a clergyman such as the poet would regard such a privilege. By this date, however, the memory of Anastasia Robinson's supposed irregular connection with Lord Peterborough should have been forgotten, for the secret marriage had been acknowledged and the countess had been six years a widow. What the Duchess of Portland meant by saying the countess was related to herself is not clear; it is affirmed, however, that she had been present at the secret marriage of the famous singer to Lord Peterborough, and it is beyond question that the two had been close friends for many years.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 263-4.

“ To be courted by a Duchess in my old age is a very extraordinary fate. Should I tell it to my parishioners, they would never believe one word I spoke to them from the pulpit afterwards: I lie therefore under a terrible dilemma; I must either burst by stifling this secret, or make atheists of my whole neighbourhood. Such scrapes as this should teach the world the wholesome lesson of humility, and never to covet blessings that are too great for them, which are very apt to overwhelm them, or to betray, and while they gratify their ambition, wound their virtue, or their peace.

“ But, Madam, I think it is in your power to make me some amends for the injury you have done me, by standing my friend with your Grace’s correspondent, Mrs. Donellan; I should be ashamed of not having the truest regard for her accomplishments; and had I not passed through London, like an arrow out of a bow, I should have paid myself the compliment of waiting on her, which I hope to do very soon.

“ As for the honour of waiting on your Grace, I have a thousand arguments against it, and ten thousand wishes for it; but wishes and arguments are a very unequal match; ’tis therefore much to be feared I shall not have virtue enough to stay away.

“ As for your Grace’s letter which has fallen into Mr. Murray’s hand, be not troubled; there were no secrets in it; had it fallen into the hands of my Lord Duke himself, it would have done no harm. I beg your Grace to be my Mr. Murray, and in your very first letter into Bond Street to turn advocate for me. This, Madam, I repeat because it is really some concern to me, for I am not only indebted to Mrs. Donellan for the credit of her acquaintance, but to her mitred brother, in a very particular manner. I am now reading some of his works, not yet published, and that with the greatest improvement and pleasure. He and I were rivals at Tunbridge as to a married lady, till her husband in a jealous fit came from town, and snatched her from the impending danger, but your Grace will keep the secret.

“ I have heard Lady Peterborough’s character, and therefore

am not at all surprised to hear she is at Bulstrode. Her ladyship is nearly akin to your Grace by a far nobler relation than that of blood. But what is that to me? I have a general objection against conversing with ladies. When hats and hoods meet, how naturally do they fall into mutual flattery! The vice, in that case, seems to have obtained a general toleration; nay, it passes for an accomplishment at least, if not a virtue. But if it is an accomplishment, accomplishments can do mischief; for this reason I think for the future, I shall converse with no woman but your Grace, not that your Grace never flatters, quite the contrary, but then you discover at the same time so good an understanding, that your flattery does no harm; though our mouths water at it, we dare not swallow it, lest, while we accept of your compliment, we should lose your esteem; for this we are sure of, we cannot do wrong under your Grace's eye, and pass undetected. Thus, Madam, is your discernment our rescue from your complaisance.

“If your Grace sees the Duchess of Kent, please to let her know that there was more virtue in her enquiring after me than she perhaps imagines; that there is an unextinguishable ambition in man which is highly gratified by such honours, shown by some sort of persons, and that I shall enter it in that short inventory of goods which Fortune allots me ‘That I was remembered in absence by the Duchess of Kent.’

“And now, Madam, have I not written a very long letter? and to show myself still more generous, I have written such a one, as cannot possibly lay your Grace under the least obligation. This, Madam, is an instance of generosity, which I desire your Grace to follow, nor let this frankness give you the least disgust, for this is the only instance of generosity in which I presume on any share of competition with you. My Lord Duke, the dear little ones, Mr. Achard—your Grace knows my meaning as well as I do, and can express it better. The sincerity of heart will appear in its birthday suit, if your Grace will vouchsafe to put it into words.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 264-5.

Mr. Achard was a privileged member of the Bulstrode household, a physician, apparently, and the duke's confidential companion. That he was a moody person is obvious from Mrs. Delany's comment during one of her visits to the effect that "Mr. Achard is sometimes Monsieur *Depoivre* and sometimes *M. du Miel*"; but his good qualities so far outweighed his uncertain temper that that defect was overlooked. As will be seen, Young makes many references to him, all of a kindly nature.

From the poet's confession that he would not have "virtue enough" to stay away from Bulstrode, the duchess naturally expected an early visit, and when that anticipation was not realised she reprimanded him in a note which he compared to "a bee in a blossom." Writing towards the end of October, he promised to wait upon her Grace by the middle of the following month, the non-fulfilment of which undertaking brought upon him another rebuke. This occasioned the letter of November the 17th in which he fixed the day for his visit.

"Your Grace in your last has brought a very severe indictment against me: I can by no means plead guilty to it. On Friday I propose rendering myself at your Grace's tribunal; I shall not be content with holding up my hand; I will hold up my heart at your bar, and if you will promise not to prick it, you shall take it in your hand, and see if you can find out that fault which you lay to my charge. I am very tender in this point, for I know that not only good manners, but virtue is concerned in the violation of that respect, which, I know, is your Grace's due, and especially from myself. But I think I shall not fly to your mercy, as an asylum from your justice; your justice seasoned with a little spice of good nature shall acquit me. I would not, Madam, persist in my vindication, was it not to rescue your Grace from a mistake, for a mistake in your Grace is such a novelty that for ought I know, it might fright you into a fine lady, and give your Grace an absolute palpitation. As for myself, I can easily own a fault when I really commit it, as a bankrupt is not very tender

of owning a debt. Especially to your Grace I should freely make confession, for, I know not how it comes to pass, I find I could prefer a pardon from your Grace before an acknowledgment from another.”<sup>1</sup>

Owing to his delay, he did not meet the Countess of Peterborough during that visit, but his acquaintance with the duchess' circle of friends was enlarged by the addition of Mrs. Dewes, the sister of Mrs. Pendarves. The letter in which he returned thanks for his hospitality is an excellent example of the whimsical manner in which he could work out a metaphor and also illustrates his habit of composing in the saddle. It is addressed from Welwyn on the 22nd of December.

“ As I write this to your Grace on horseback, you will forgive the many allusions you meet with to that animal. The first I shall saddle is Mrs. Pendarves. I look on her understanding to be very surefooted, and perfectly acquainted with the road ; and though her understanding could show a good sheer pair of heels, and distance most companies it comes into, yet is it wisely content not to rob others of their good humour by seeing themselves undone ; thinking it enough that it is in power to give them the spleen when she thinks fit. As for Miss Robinson, her understanding is of the best blood, and can carry any plate she thinks good to put in for, but it is sometimes pleased to prance than run, which has this advantage in it, that it is done with more grace, and less pains, and yet carries in it a demonstration at the same time, that she can leave us whenever she will. As for Mrs. Dewes, my horse says he has no more similes, unless she will permit me to say, that perfect complaisance seems to be the spur of her conversation, and discretion to hold the rein. As for your Grace, your understanding has been in the manage ; Art and Nature can't adjust their rights about it ; each swears in its turn, that she is your greatest benefactor, and not being able to agree,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 266.

they split the difference ; Nature takes all that is most amiable in your conversation, and Art all that is most prudent, yet even this does not end the dispute, for they are forced to call for grains and scruples to determine which has the largest share.

“ Thus, ladies, have I saluted you all round ; and I am now for binding you up in one nosegay altogether. Thus incorporated, pray, ladies, what are you ? are you the Graces or the Muses ? You are too many for the first, and too few for the last, and yet there is a vast deal of both those sisterhoods in you. I will therefore fairly tell your Grace what I apprehend to be the case. Considering what a world we live in, and that wit and beauty run both pretty low, those two societies could no longer separately subsist, and that they might not both make an absolute break of it, one somewhat like your Grace, and wiser than the rest, proposed a coalition, and deputed you four ladies as a little committee to mankind, to show that they still subsist, and to do them credit with the world. But whether this be quite honest in those jades called goddesses, I leave to my Lord Duke and Mr. Achard to determine, to whom I beg duty, respect and service.”<sup>1</sup>

Although he did not excuse himself to the duchess on that account, it is probable that Young’s delay in visiting Bulstrode on this occasion may have been due to his attending the funeral of one of his neighbouring clerical friends. All through his life he was on amicable relations with the clergy in the vicinity of Welwyn, one of his closest intimates being the Rev. Daniel Hallows, of Allhallows, Hertford, who died in the October of this year.<sup>2</sup> It was Mr. Hallows’ daughter Mary who was to take charge of the poet’s household when Caroline Lee left Welwyn for a home of her own.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Young wrote the epitaph for Mr. Hallows which is given in Nichols’ *Literary Anecdotes*, ix, 510.



“Whose yesterdays look backwards with a smile ;  
Nor, like the Parthian, wound him as they fly.”  
*Night Thoughts, II.*

From the design by THOMAS STOTHARD





## CHAPTER VI

### THE " NIGHT THOUGHTS "

1742-1745

YOUNG's letters to the Duchess of Portland, especially in the early period of the correspondence, were so largely impersonal that they throw little light on the events as distinguished from the thoughts of his life. Such a reference as that occasioned by the illness of Mrs. Elstob, the expression of his hope that she would not add to the great number of " touching admonitions " which Providence had lately given him of his own mortality, is almost exasperatingly indefinite in view of the influence of his personal sorrows on his best-known poem. Had he specified those admonitions he would have solved many of his biographers' problems. The only bereavement he had suffered within a few months of the date of that letter of which we have any knowledge was the sudden death, in the previous August, of Henry Temple, the widower of the poet's stepdaughter Elizabeth, who had thus survived his wife less than four years. Young doubtless thought it would have been a breach of good manners to relate his domestic history to the duchess ; it will not have escaped the reader that up to this date he not only had not mentioned his wife, but had been equally silent as to his surviving stepdaughter and his own son.

But that the poet sorrowed sincerely and deeply over the loss of his wife is proved by more than his son's testimony that he was " never cheerful " after her death. That bereavement, indeed, cast a sombre shadow over many years of his life ; it was not only to make his muse still more melancholy, but to impart a sobriety to his most graceful compliments. Who can question, for example, the personal note in that paragraph of his letter of January the 12th, 1742, in which he touches upon the dark side of matrimonial happiness.

“ Your Grace’s friend has lately called on me twice ; he passes to and fro like an inhabitant of another world, and tells us the deceased, the buried in the country, what is doing upon earth. I sent my compliments to your Grace by him, which I was half unwilling to do, for though we of these lower regions bear a good regard to virtue, yet, since we are quite incapable of doing any real service, we are sparing of verbal civilities, lest it should look like compliment and nothing else. If Miss Dashwood is the creature you represent, I give your Grace joy of her, but I more congratulate herself ; all gain by good qualities, but the possessor most ; but be pleased, Madam, to observe that this possessor should be possessed. Fine women unmarried are like fine diamonds in the jeweller’s shop, gazed at by multitudes, but enjoyed by none, and if they stay there too long, they are cheapened down below their real value. The lady and the ring should both be worn ; the ring, when on the finger, is in its proper situation, and answering the end for which it was made. Now I talk of marriage, I will tell your Grace a piece of news : Sir Thomas Hanmer was married last Thursday to Mrs. Pendarves. This I heard in this country but yesterday ; I wish it be true, for I know they would both be happier in that state than singly they can possibly be. There is but one objection against marriage, and that is one which the wise world amongst its ten thousand objections never makes ; I mean that the husband and wife seldom die in one day, and then the survivor must be necessarily miserable.

“ But to return to your delightful Miss Dashwood, your Grace says she is extremely modest ; I will let your Grace into a secret, for I know Miss Dashwood well ; I knew her mother before her, and I knew her daughter though yet unborn. This modesty is a lowly and successful cheat ; it seems to decline that which it most desires ; it proceeds from a love of esteem, joined to a diffidence of our taking the most proper methods to gain it. This diffidence creates that inward uneasy motion which discovers itself in the cheeks ; a blushing cheek who would not kiss ? But why ? Because our own

pride tells us it carries some deference in it to our judgment, and a desire of our good opinion ; so that the praise we bestow on this virtue proceeds in some measure from our own vice. Thus you see, Madam, that I like the liberty of calling your Grace proud ; but, Madam, take not offence at it, for if love of esteem is a vice, which is all that I lay to your or Miss Dashwood's charge, it is a vice that is to be found in other angels, in those above : love of esteem is planted in all created rational beings for excellent purposes, and it can never do harm but when it is conducted or directed amiss. Let none then be so proud, and so foolish too at the same time, as to say they have no pride in them. I honour Miss Dashwood's modest pride ; it is the only pride that carries its point ; confident pride defeats itself, and loses our esteem by being too sure of carrying it. I dwell on this, because, about ten years ago, it was quite a fashion with young ladies to pretend to more impudence than they had, and nothing could put them so much out of countenance as to have it suspected that they were capable of blushing at anything. If your Grace knows any such, please to tell them from me that they extremely mistake their own interest, if their designs are on mankind ; men are such impudent rascals, but to their honour be it spoken, so conscious of that their grand defect, that they dote on modesty wherever they find it, though it should happen to be in coal dust and tatters. What pretty company have I brought your Grace into ! ”<sup>1</sup>

Young was, of course, wrong in marrying Mrs. Pendarves to Sir Thomas Hanmer, as he owned a little later ; whether his character sketch of the modest Miss Dashwood was nearer to truth there are no data for deciding, for this is her solitary appearance in the correspondence.

Lengthy as had been the poet's letter of the 12th of January, the next day found him writing to the duchess again to condole with her on the illness of her mother. And as the matrimonial passage in his previous epistle had been coloured

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 267-9.

by his own experience, so in dwelling upon the happiness to be derived from relations his thoughts were turned to the suffering involved in their loss. It is in this letter we find the first reference to his surviving stepdaughter, Caroline Lee, who had evidently seen little of the world outside Welwyn. The Lady Cathcart, whom the poet describes as his neighbour, and who will make a tragic appearance in subsequent epistles, was the year-old widow of general Lord Cathcart, and was living in Tewin manor, the home of the first of her four husbands.

“What your Grace says of my Lady Oxford grieves me, very sincerely I speak it, for I honour and love, and ever shall, the virtues of that lady. Your Grace was so good in your last letter as to pass a very handsome compliment; had it been more, I should have had the honour of waiting on you here, which I humbly hoped for a week together, and put my house in order. Caroline, whom your Grace is so good as to remember, will soon be in town, and humbly begs she may be permitted the honour and pleasure of waiting on you. My Lady Cathcart, our neighbour, who has a house in Westminster, is so good to take her to town for some time, that the child may be cured of starting at a human face.

“I share your concern, Madam, for her Grace of Kent; I have as well great obligations to her, as a high opinion of her.

“Some, Madam, are apt to think that God Almighty’s providence is indeed very particular and notorious, as to kingdoms and nations; but as to persons they imagine it is somewhat more distant or remiss. The truth, I conceive, is, that the Almighty’s providence and inspection is equal as to both; all methods are taken with us, that can be taken with free agents, in order to our amendment, and though almost everything is an instrument in the hand of Providence to this end; yet what seems to me to be peculiarly, and in the most eminent and evident degree such, is our friends. With these Heaven can most encourage and most chastise us; these can give us the greatest pleasure and these the greatest

pain. I would by no means damp that blessed and reasonable satisfaction which arises from them in our days of joy; far from it. It is not only our prudence, but our duty, to enjoy them, but then we should sometimes consider, amid these most endearing and amiable enjoyments, that perhaps we are that moment whetting the arrow that shall wound us; for most sure it is the more we enjoy, the more we may suffer from them; the more severely we shall feel their folly, their misfortune, or their loss.

"Your Grace says you have a disposition little able to support the loss or misfortune of your friends. Madam, I never heard you commend yourself before. The highest character that can be given of a human creature is: 'A being with a feeling heart.' Such a heart, I confess, runs great risk in the present scene; and yet human prudence and Divine Providence together form an ampler shield for our defence than is generally imagined. And when arrows of pain strike through it, such a feeling heart has this to say to itself 'That those very pains well borne will entitle it to a scene, where there is nothing but pleasure to be felt; and where an unfeeling heart shall never enter.'"<sup>1</sup>

Although Young's letters to the Duchess of Portland are prolific in allusions to the nobility, they are remarkably barren of references to his literary contemporaries. Yet his titled friend often asked his opinion of the books of the day, one such inquiry having prompted the opening sentences of a reply which is ascribed to the February of this year—1742. As Richardson's *Pamela* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* were the talk of the town at this date, there is little doubt that he had in his mind one or other of those novelists, most probably Richardson, whose acquaintance the poet had made long ere this.

"As I design myself the honour of waiting on your Grace very soon, I shall not by letter forestall what I have to say as

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 269.

to the authors you mention. Fiction may have a good tendency, and history may have a bad one, which I believe to be the case with regard to these two writers, of whom I shall say no more at present. I am much obliged to the two ladies for the thousand fine things they did not say of me, but I take it a little ill that they did not make it ten thousand, since it would have cost them no more. Madam, I beg my love and envy to the little ones, my real duty to my Lord Duke, and my humble service to Mr. Achard. The bear your Grace mentioned in your last has stretched out his great paw, and drags me to town, through bad weather, and gangs of robbers, which infest Enfield Chase; but what can the fools expect of a man at law? I hope they will not beat me for my poverty, for I can honestly assure them, that I have parted with my money to gentlemen who deserve hanging full as well as themselves, which they cannot take ill of me, at least, not so ill as if I had fooled it away in paying my debts, or squandered it in charity. I am, Madam, heartily glad to hear that Mrs. Elstob is restored to her health, and pleasing province of sowing the seeds of virtue and accomplishment in so happy a soil. God preserve, and increase your Grace's peculiar blessings, you know how to make a right use of them, nor need I say to your Grace, what I might very properly to many: 'Happy are they who are not hurt by good things, happy are they who have nothing on earth which they hold dearer than their Maker.'"<sup>1</sup>

Another letter of the early part of 1742 is largely occupied with the "melancholy matters" of a missive from the duchess. The Duke of Portland made a good recovery from his ailment, but the young Lady Frances had less than a year to live. Still more imminent was the death of Dr. Alured Clarke, the dean of Exeter, whose acquaintance Young seems to have made at Bulstrode. That clergyman's character was a singular mixture of greed and benevolence; as there was no limit to his appetite for preferment, so there were no bounds

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 270.

to his generosity. He is said to have spent the whole of his surplus income on charity, while to him belongs the distinction of having established the first county hospital in England.

Of the two peers mentioned in this letter, the first, Viscount Quarendon, was the eldest son of Lady Elizabeth Young's brother, the second Earl of Lichfield, of the Lee family. His accession to the earldom was not far distant, but in the meantime he was the Member of Parliament for Oxfordshire, and was, apparently, sure of the Portland interest. Lord Cornbury was the friend of Pope and Bolinbroke, and in warm sympathy with the High Tory party.

"I humbly thank your Grace for your kind letter, but there are too many melancholy articles in it to give all the satisfaction I could wish. I hope my Lord Duke is perfectly recovered of the gout, and that Lady Fanny has likewise set your Grace's heart at ease as to her disorder. But poor Dr. Clarke—but why do I call him poor? I know no one whose death-bed I should more envy; he's a very exemplary man, I love his person, and I reverence his character; I would write to him, but that I fear might some way or other prove troublesome, yet I long to know how he does, and to hear better news of him, than your Grace sent me. If, therefore, you should do me the honour of writing, I beg, Madam, a line or two concerning him. I proposed much satisfaction in his acquaintance.

"It gives me great pleasure that Lord Quarendon has your Grace's vote; he certainly deserves it, and he has as certainly in it a proper reward of great desert. Lord Cornbury I have not the honour of knowing, but I hope your Grace will introduce me to his acquaintance; I know his Lordship's character, or I should not desire this favour. When persons of quality have equal merit with the most deserving of those below them, they have really greater. The diamond is better set, and throws a brighter lustre; I do not mean from their fortune only, but from their manner, which often has a grace and dignity in it incommunicable to those of inferior rank. Since

your Grace by your own authority has been pleased to divorce Mrs. Pendarves and Sir Thomas Hanmer, they need not have the trouble of going to Doctors' Commons. I propose, Madam, the honour of waiting on your Grace in town about the 18th of next month, but if possible, and no great trouble to you, I should be truly obliged if your Grace would let me hear of Dr. Clarke long before. The herse of Mr. Hale, my neighbour, friend, and a most eminently worthy young gentleman, passed by my door for his own seat, this very moment; he went to town to provide for his marriage with one Miss Gilbert (whom I know well and admire) and died with her wedding ring on his finger. These things strike us, but most people are struck so often by them, that at last they seem to lose their feeling. When these things cease to pain us, Heaven gives us up; it leaves us entirely to the world to make the most of it; the next step is, that the world, having us entirely its own, begins to domineer, and denies us our usual share of pleasure, which is the necessary case of the abandoned, and then we are finely bit." <sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the hopeful news of Dr. Clarke, which Young communicated to the Duchess of Portland in the following letter of the 3rd of May, their worthy friend was near his end, for he died on the last day of that month.

"Such is my opinion of your Grace's goodness, that I can choose no subject more agreeable to you than to speak of your friends. Last week a neighbour of poor Dr. Clarke's now in Huntingdonshire called on me; he told me our friend was still living, and that his physician said he might possibly live four or five years longer. That is in the ever blessed will of God. After this melancholy account, I will give your Grace something more comfortable. The doctor retains his spirits, and is cheerful under circumstances that fright the bystander. Now this would be impossible, was there not an indulgent Being who frights us with the appearance of

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 270-1.



remote evils, in order to give entrance to His fear into our hearts, and when those evils come supports us under them beyond our expectation, and more still beyond our deserts. Dr. Clarke's behaviour brings to my memory some lines which I have formerly read, whether it be in Fletcher perhaps your Grace can tell. After the author has represented a good man, whose name is Philander, on his death-bed behaving to the surprise of all about him, he adds—

'As some tall tower, or lofty mountain's brow  
 Detains the sun, illustrious from its height,  
 When rising vapours, and descending shades,  
 In damps and darkness drown the spacious vale,  
 Philander thus augustly reared his head  
 Undamped by doubt, undarkened by despair;  
 At that black hour, which general horror sheds  
 On the low level of inglorious minds,  
 Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,  
 Divinely beamed on his exalted soul.  
 With incommunicable lustre bright.'

"I hope in God, Madam, we may see our Philander again, before these verses are applicable to him in their full extent. Heaven is pleased to permit our friends to be so very dear to us, that our parting with them, which must necessarily be sometimes the case, might in some degree lessen that strong hold which the world is apt to take on our hearts: the most deplorable case of all is, when the world so entirely fills our hearts, as not to leave room even for our friends. If such there are, Heaven keep your Grace as distant from them, as your disposition is from theirs."<sup>1</sup>

Young was usually so secretive about his poetical compositions that the Duchess of Portland may have been momentarily misled by his reference to Fletcher; but if her Grace had turned to the works of either of the four poets of that name she must soon have realised the hopelessness of discovering that tribute to Philander.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 271-2.

For, of course, Young was quoting from himself. And the fact that he should have cited those lines from the second of the *Night Thoughts* in the May of 1742 is presumptive proof that the first poem, *The Complaint; or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, was already completed. Such, indeed, must have been the case, for in the following month, the June of 1742, that poem was issued by Dodsley as a quarto pamphlet in blue paper covers, with a picture of the poet absorbed in nocturnal meditation in the moon-lit churchyard of Welwyn.

Although more than a year had gone by, Young was still living in the shadow of his wife's death. Marriage had but one drawback, he had written to the Duchess of Portland; rarely did husband and wife die on the same day, "and then the survivor must be necessarily miserable"; friends were a keen delight, but the more they were loved the more unendurable was their loss. The first of the *Night Thoughts* was issued to the world without explanation of the melancholy experiences which had inspired its lines, but to the fourth poem the author contributed a preface in which he assured his readers that the occasion of his work was "real, not fictitious." The poem was begun, he added, "purely as a refuge under uneasiness, when more proper studies wanted sufficient relish to detain the writer's attention to them." The three deaths mentioned in the first instalment had so overwhelmed him with grief that he did actually seek surcease from sorrow in the manner described in his lines.

Those three deaths are the most puzzling problem of Young's biography, owing to the fact that in his poem he locates them so near to each other. After asking Death why he should exhaust his "partial quiver" on a target so mean as himself, he continued—

"Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?  
Thy shaft flew thrice; and thrice my peace was slain;  
And thrice, ere thrice yon moon had fill'd her horn."

Now, if those lines are to be interpreted literally, there is no escaping the conclusion that the poet had suffered three



*Photo by*

**OLD HOUSE, WELWYN CHURCHYARD**

*A. G. Bishop, Cotdicote*



bereavements within three months. But unfortunately no known facts of his biography correspond with such a deduction.

It is usually supposed that the three deaths Young had in his mind were those of his stepdaughter Elizabeth, her husband, and his own wife; but the first of these occurred in the October of 1736, the second in the August of 1740, and the third in the January of 1741. Thus the two bereavements which were nearest in point of time were separated by five months, while the third took place more than four years earlier. Of all these losses the one which affected him most deeply was that of his wife; that was the culminating burden of his sorrows, having issue in sleepless nights and melancholy days; and it is highly probable that it was the poignancy of that bereavement which so intensified his sense of sorrow as to prompt him to the poetic licence of his perplexing lines. That the "thrice ere thrice yon moon had fill'd her horn" was a poetic exaggeration seems beyond question.

Although there is no direct allusion to Lady Young in *The Complaint*, there are numerous touches which suggest the gloom of a home that has been deprived of its brightest presence. The lonely husband feels that he has plumbed the depths of sorrow, for he can "lose no more"; his desolated home is haunted by the ghosts of his "departed joys"; the scythe of death has swept down the "fairest bloom" of his garden; all his dreams of unchanging happiness had vanished at the toll of death.

There is a sequence in this first of the *Night Thoughts* which is not so obvious in some of the later instalments. Its familiar opening line, as much a household word as the most proverbial phrase from Shakespeare—

"Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

leads naturally to the picture of the poet arising in midnight from his sleepless repose, and to his effective apostrophe to the scene of quiescent nature.

“Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,  
 In rayless majesty, now stretches forth  
 Her leaden sceptre o’er a slumb’ring world.  
 Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!  
 Nor eye, nor list’ning ear, an object finds;  
 Creation sleeps. ’Tis as the gen’ral pulse  
 Of life stood still, and nature made a pause:  
 An awful pause! prophetic of her end.”

Then follow the devout invocation and fervent prayer, to be succeeded by the solemn passage on the flight of time suggested by the tolling bell in the church tower. Even thus early in his theme the poet is already groping towards the consolation afforded by the conviction of immortality, for which he finds an argument in his dreams.

“’Tis past conjecture; all things rise in proof:  
 While o’er my limbs sleep’s soft dominion spread:  
 What though my soul fantastic measures trod  
 O’er fairy fields; or mourn’d along the gloom  
 Of pathless woods; or down the craggy steep  
 Hurl’d headlong, swam with pain the mantled pool;  
 Or scal’d the cliff; or danc’d on hollow winds,  
 With antic shapes, wild natives of the brain?  
 Her ceaseless flight, tho’ devious, speaks her nature  
 Of subtler essence than the trodden clod;  
 Active, aerial, tow’ring, unconfin’d,  
 Unfetter’d with his gross companion’s fall.  
 Ev’n silent night proclaims my soul immortal:  
 Ev’n silent night proclaims eternal day.  
 For human weal, heaven husbands all events;  
 Dull sleep instructs, nor sport vain dreams in vain.”

One of Young’s favourite lessons, that pain is permitted “to teach us to be kind,” is enforced in the passage in which he excuses his grief on the plea that he mourns vicariously “for millions,” and another moral so often met in his letters is here illustrated with his usual felicity of metaphor.

“All men think all men mortal, but themselves;  
 Themselves, when some alarming shock of fate  
 Strikes thro’ their wounded hearts the sudden dread;  
 But their hearts wounded, like the wounded air,

Soon close ; where past the shaft, no trace is found.  
As from the wing no scar the sky retains ;  
The parted wave no furrow from the keel ;  
So dies in human hearts the thought of death."

Two of the three most famous characters of the *Night Thoughts*, Lorenzo and Philander, make their appearance in *The Complaint*, a fact which ought to have prevented the formulating of that insane theory which identified the first-named with the poet's own son. It has been seen that Frederick Young was born in the June of 1732, consequently by the date of the publication of *The Complaint* he had just completed his first decade, a somewhat early age for him to have served as the model of so accomplished a profligate as Lorenzo ! Unsympathetic (and often ill-informed) as is George Eliot's essay on Young, and a study in supposed moral inconsistency which came with ill grace from one who had committed herself to an irregular matrimonial connection, it may be admitted that the novelist was justified in describing as " futile " most of the efforts to find the originals of the poet's *Night Thoughts* characters. The most probable theory in the case of the worldly Lorenzo is that Young had the Duke of Wharton chiefly in his mind ; but the more rational position to assume is that his Lorenzo and Philander were composite portraits embodying traits observed in many men. To assert that the unworldly Philander was drawn solely from Henry Temple is to create new difficulties without solving the old, for whereas in the poem Philander dies before Narcissa, in actuality the reverse was the case.

A few weeks after the publication of *The Complaint*, Young proceeded to Tunbridge Wells for his annual "cure," and the closing paragraph of the first of his two letters thence, dated the 1st of August, shows that his friends at Bulstrode were beginning to exert themselves to procure his preferment in the Church.

" As this is a place where books are denied us, as unwholesome, we must either read human nature, in that pretty

edition the good company gives us of it, or read nothing at all. I have read the company over and over, some of the pages of which were very fair and delightful, others were sullied, and dogs-eared with the cares and troubles of human life, and contributed more to the prevalence of the spleen, than the waters to the cure of it.

“Your Grace, I know, is curious to know the general contents of this human folio I have been reading, or what real knowledge I have gathered from my perusal of it.

“Madam, I fancy you have read it so often, and so well understand it yourself, that all I can extract from it will be nothing but a bad copy of your Grace’s own thoughts. However, if your Grace has a mind to contemplate the difference between a Zincke and a sign-post, I will send you my portrait of human nature, but I must beg leave to defer exposing myself till my next.

“For really, Madam, though there is no one on earth could sooner persuade me out of my senses than your Grace, yet I dare positively affirm that my head is giddy, but whether I stand on my head or my heels I will not presume to be quite so positive.

“But, Madam, I hope I shall never be so much indisposed as to forget the great obligations I lie under to your Grace and my Lord Duke, who has, I plainly find, made so serious a point of promoting my interest with their two Graces of Newcastle and Canterbury, that I am scarce more obliged by his favour, than astonished at his singularity.”<sup>1</sup>

Between them, the Duke and Duchess of Portland seem to have drawn up a list of the statesmen who were, in their opinion, most likely to be of real service in promoting their ambition for the advancement of their friend. The most powerful group for the moment comprised the Duke of Newcastle and the Earl of Wilmington, to the latter of whom, when he was Sir Spencer Compton, Young had inscribed one of his satires, and to whom, doubtless on a hint from Bulstrode,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 272.



he was now dedicating the second of his *Night Thoughts*. Wilmington was at this juncture Prime Minister, but as he had less than a year to live, and was notoriously indifferent to dedications, he was to furnish another example of the poet's ill fortune in his selection of patrons. The Duke of Newcastle was a far more influential member of the ministry, and the Duke and Duchess of Portland seem to have used their utmost exertions to secure his interest. What hope they had from the Earl of Egmont, however, is not obvious, especially as that peer was associated with the malcontent party of the Prince of Wales. Yet it appears from Young's second letter from Tunbridge Wells, dated the 21st of August, that he had acted on the hint of her Grace of Portland and had made himself known to Egmont. He also, as will be seen, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the John Potter of lowly origin who was accused of administering his province in such a high-handed manner. The husband of Miss Robinson, whom Young hesitated to congratulate, was of course the Edward Montagu from whom that favourite of Bulstrode derived her better-known name.

"Your Grace is pleased to write to me in so obliging and in so sensibly affectionate a manner, that it, as it were, chastises, while it confers the greatest obligation, and gives me some pain to consider how little I deserve it at your hands. Your Grace is pleased to ask pardon for giving me most kind and prudent advice; Madam, rather ask pardon, for pardon asked, for that seems to imply a mean opinion of my gratitude or understanding. As to Lord Egmont, whose character I honour, I thought I put myself in his way. It was not for me by making the first advance to take his lordship into my patronage; but perhaps I was too shy; I assure your Grace I'll endeavour to mend for the future.

"I hope in God, Madam, your Grace's spirits are raised by my Lady Oxford's perfect recovery: the loss of a friend is certainly the severest stroke under heaven. My Lady Bateman was here at that time: she had appointed me to drink tea

with her that afternoon, and when I came to the door I met the sad news, which denied me that favour. I remember the time when I have trembled at the sound of a post-horn, and was as much startled at the sight of a letter, as I should have been at a warrant to seize my person and vast estate.

“ I congratulate your Grace on Miss Robinson’s marriage, but I will not congratulate her spouse till I know he deserves her. But your Grace knows my opinion of her already ; she is a surprising young being, by which I would mean, something of a middle nature between angel and woman. Your Grace will naturally understand this better than another.

“ But you, it seems, Madam, are humbly content with desiring a portrait of mere human nature ; this, Madam, I promised, and this, God willing, I will perform. But not now, I do not design to trifle, but to be quite serious in it, not for your Grace’s information, but to rescue you from your aversion, news, and chit-chat, which have by the cruel courtesy of England taken possession of the epistolary pen. But at present my thought is so much engaged on something else, that I care not to enter on that subject till I am more at leisure.

“ I beg, Madam, my humble duty to my Lord Duke, and please to let his Grace know, that on the receipt of his last kind letter I immediately writ to the Archbishop, as he advised. It was such a letter, as neither has received, nor expected an answer. I hope your Grace’s olive branches flourish, and since the spirit of prophecy is on me, I will foretell a miracle ; they shall one day be turned into laurels and myrtles. Prophecies, your Grace knows, are always somewhat obscure, but if you consult Whiston, or, perhaps, Mr. Achard, to whom my humble service, he’ll probably let you into my meaning.” <sup>1</sup>

Late in the year, and at a time, too, when he should have been on duty at Kensington Palace as a royal chaplain, Young had a severe illness, during which his place at court was taken by the Rev. Mr. Hay. As soon as he was convalescent he

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 272-3.

resumed his correspondence with the duchess, writing from Welwyn on the 12th of December.

" I bless God my danger is over, but my recovery is slow. The good news your Grace sends me of my Lord Duke and my Lady Oxford will promote it. I never saw anything in Mr. Hay but what was a symptom of sound sense ; I am not therefore so much surprised, as pleased, at the account you give of his sermon. If your Grace sees him, I beg my humble service and thanks for his late favour to me at Kensington. A good sermon is a most rational and high entertainment to those that are so happy as to have a relish for it, which, I am persuaded, is your Grace's case. To keep preaching a little in countenance with those that have no very favourable opinion of it, give me leave, Madam, to observe that the whole creation preaches ; I mean, that we can make no just observation on any of the appearances in the material world, but what will naturally have a moral good effect on us. The Sacred Scriptures, therefore, are very justly regarded as God Almighty's second volume, and creation as His first ; which speaks to the same purpose, and if attended to, is ever bettering the human heart. How happy, then, and wise is your Grace, who are fond of both these books ! Mr. Hay, and others, of eminent talents for the pulpit, are only commentators on them, or panegyrists in their praise. Your Grace by this time sees there is something sacred, as well as entertaining, in your drawers of shells, etc. ; they may be considered as so many little pages of that immense volume, which God Almighty has published in a most pompous edition to induce His rational creatures to a ready and constant perusal of it. Proceed, Madam, by your exemplary life and behaviour, nay, even by your amusements, to preach to the preachers, and among others, to the most attentive of your congregation, your Grace's much obliged, and most obedient, humble servant." <sup>1</sup>

Ere the year ended the second and third of the *Night*

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 274.

*Thoughts* had been given to the world. It was, of course, Young's preoccupation with those poems which prevented him keeping his hasty promise to send the duchess a "portrait of human nature" from Tunbridge Wells; his thought, as he explained, was so "much engaged on something else" as to leave no leisure to fulfil his engagement.

As in the case of *The Complaint*, the second and third *Night Thoughts* each had a sub-title, that of the second being *On Time, Death, and Friendship*, and that of the third *Narcissa*. The exordium of these poems, too, is reminiscent of the opening lines of *The Complaint*, each depicting the author as again rising at midnight to resume his meditations. If the third *Night* wanders somewhat from its subject, the second keeps fairly closely to its triune thesis. After the poet has affirmed that they only rightly mourn the dead who live as "they desire," and reminded his readers that toys will not amuse when "medicines cannot cure," he enters an earnest plea for the conservation of time.

"On all important time, thro' ev'ry age,  
 Tho' much, and warm, the wise have urg'd; the man  
 Is yet unborn, who duly weighs an hour.  
 'I've lost a day'—the prince who nobly cried  
 Had been an emperor without his crown;  
 Of Rome? say, rather, lord of human race:  
 He spoke, as if deputed by mankind.  
 So should all speak: so reason speaks in all:  
 From the soft whispers of that God in man,  
 Why fly to folly, why to phrensy fly,  
 For rescue from the blessing we possess?"

To those who found time hang heavy on their hands he speaks in an effective parable.

"To man's false optics (from his folly false)  
 Time, in advance, behind him hides his wings,  
 And seems to creep, decrepit with his age;  
 Behold him, when past by; what then is seen,  
 But his broad pinions swifter than the winds?  
 And all mankind, in contradiction strong,  
 Rueful, aghast! cry out on his career."



“ Death drops his mask ;  
Frowns out at full ; they start, despair, expire ”  
*Night Thoughts, V.*

From the design by THOMAS STOTHARD



Having reiterated his moral that only time used is life, and that the ill-used days of vanity haunt men as the ghosts of yesterday, the poet becomes the prophet of the inevitable future.

"Why spur the speedy? Why with levities  
New wing thy short, short day's too rapid flight?  
Know'st thou, or what thou dost, or what is done?  
Man flies from time, and time from man; too soon  
In sad divorce this double flight must end:  
And then, where are we? where, Lorenzo! then  
Thy sports? thy pomps?—I grant thee, in a state  
Not unambitious; in the ruffled shroud,  
Thy Parian tomb's triumphant arch beneath.  
Has death his fopperies? Then well may life  
Put on her plume, and in her rainbow shine.  
Ye well-array'd! ye lilies of our land!  
Ye lilies male! who neither toil nor spin,  
(As sister lilies might) if not so wise  
As Solomon, more sumptuous to the sight!  
Ye delicate! who nothing can support,  
Yourselves most insupportable! for whom  
The winter rose must blow, the sun put on  
A brighter beam in Leo; silky-soft  
Favonius breathe still softer, or be chid;  
And other worlds send odours, sauce, and song,  
And robes, and notions, fram'd in foreign looms!  
O ye Lorenzos of our age! who deem  
One moment unamus'd, a misery  
Not made for feeble man! who call aloud  
For ev'ry bawble drivell'd o'er by sense;  
For rattles, and conceits of ev'ry cast,  
For change of follies, and relays of joy,  
To drag your patient through the tedious length  
Of a short winter's day—say, sages! say,  
Wit's oracles! say, dreamers of gay dreams!  
How will you weather an eternal night,  
Where such expedients fail?"

Death was imminent, he continued, for the "hours that lately smil'd" were already with the past; the shadow on the dial preached to all who would hear; life was not a level plain but a "descent." Then comes the transition to virtuous

friendship, Young's panegyric of which was more coloured by his recollections of his lost wife than by his memory of Philander.

“Celestial happiness, whene'er she stoops  
 To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,  
 And one alone, to make her sweet amends  
 For absent heaven—the bosom of a friend ;  
 Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft,  
 Each other's pillow to repose divine.  
 Beware the counterfeit : in passion's flame  
 Hearts melt, but melt like ice, soon harder froze.  
 True love strikes root in reason ; passion's foe :  
 Virtue alone entenders us for life :  
 I wrong her much—entenders us for ever.”

Young's resource in devising prose compliments to the Duchess of Portland has already been illustrated in his letters ; the dedication of *Narcissa* to her Grace gave him an opportunity to approve his poetic courtesy. A little previously his titled friend had appeared at a masquerade as Cynthia, and, taking his cue from that disguise, the poet scornfully resigned Phoebus to his fellow bards in favour of “ Day's soft-eyed sister ” as the inspiration of his muse. Hence his invocation to the mistress of Bulstrode.

“Thou, who didst lately borrow Cynthia's form,  
 And modestly forego thine own ! O thou,  
 Who didst thyself, at midnight hours, inspire !  
 Say, why not Cynthia, patroness of song ?  
 As thou her crescent, she thy character  
 Assumes ; still more a goddess by the change.”

But the chief interest of the third of the *Night Thoughts* consists in its references to the ill-fated *Narcissa*. Her character is sketched in lines which are perhaps the most felicitous of the entire poem.

“Sweet harmonist ! and beautiful as sweet !  
 And young as beautiful ! and soft as young !  
 And gay as soft ! and innocent as gay !  
 And happy (if aught happy here) as good !



For fortune fond had built her nest on high.  
 Like birds quite exquisite of note and plume,  
 Transfixt by fate (who loves a lofty mark)  
 How from the summit of the grove she fell,  
 And left it unharmonious! All its charms  
 Extinguist in the wonders of her song!  
 Her song still vibrates in my ravisht ear,  
 Still melting there, and with voluptuous pain  
 (O to forget her!) thrilling thro' my heart!"

If the poem is to be accepted as literally true, the following facts emerge: Narcissa died after Philander; she was "snatch'd" in her "bridal hour"; as soon as the "lustre languisht in her eye" and "pale omen" sat upon her cheek, the poet, with "parental haste," bore her to a warmer clime; and when death seized her in a foreign land, she, owing to her Protestant faith, was denied Christian burial. Here is the sequel as Young told it.

"Denied the charity of dust, to spread  
 O'er dust! a charity their dogs enjoy.  
 What could I do? What succour? What resource?  
 With pious sacrilege, a grave I stole;  
 With impious piety, that grave I wrong'd;  
 Short in my duty; coward in my grief!  
 More like her murderer, than friend, I crept,  
 With soft-suspended step, and muffled deep  
 In midnight darkness, whisper'd my last sigh."

On the theory that Narcissa was Elizabeth Temple, and that the incident described above took place in France, this was, as Joseph Texte has confessed, a serious enough matter to "cover the French nation with confusion." He adds: "The gruesome story of the father burying his daughter in secret went the round of Europe; and a lugubrious engraving representing Young interring Narcissa by the light of a lantern was introduced as a frontispiece to the second volume of Letourneur's translation of the *Night Thoughts*. Such intolerance on the part of the French seemed monstrous. Young, the victim of fate, appeared also to be the victim of fanaticism, and for many a long year English visitors made pilgrimages

to the melancholy grotto where this drama had been enacted. Unfortunately for the poet's sincerity, the story is of his own invention. The death of Young's stepdaughter did actually occur in France, but at Lyon, as a learned inhabitant of that town has shown, and not at Montpellier; she was buried at the former place, not in a nameless grave, but in the enclosure formerly reserved for Protestants, and not by stealth, but with all befitting ceremony. At most it appears that the cost of interment was excessive, and it was this trifling grievance that was dramatically treated by Young."<sup>1</sup>

To absolve Young from the charge of insincerity, which, by the way, postulates a literal interpretation of his poem, it has been theorised that he had a daughter of his own, that she fell into a decline, that he took her to France, and that it was for her and not for Mrs. Temple he committed his "pious sacrilege." This guess is no more fortunate than that which makes his son the original of Lorenzo. Narcissa died in her "bridal hour," but by 1742 any daughter Young might have had would not have completed her tenth year, for he did not marry till 1731, and his son was born in the June of the following year. Doubtless there are traits of Elizabeth Temple in Narcissa, but, as in the cases of Lorenzo and Philander, there can be no question that she is a composite portrait, the lights and shades of which were heightened by imagination.

Although the poet, after the fashion of his age, doubtless supplemented most of his formal dedications by personal letters to their subjects, only one such epistle has survived, this being his semi-apology for the restraint with which he inscribed the fourth of the *Night Thoughts* to the Hon. Philip Yorke, the future second Earl of Hardwicke. Two years earlier Mr. Yorke had collaborated in the writing of the once-famous *Athenian Letters*, a work which, apparently, the poet had in mind when he described his muse as "much indebted" to the subject of his dedication. The letter is undated, but its reference to "the other day" shows that it was written

<sup>1</sup> *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature*, 305-6.

subsequent to the publication of the fourth of the *Night Thoughts*, which was issued in the March of 1743.

" Sir,—In the poem which I took the freedom to address to you the other day, my inclination would have led me to say more of you, but my just sense of your modesty restrained me: especially when I considered the repulse which I was informed by a good hand, you gave to the very excellent writer of the *Life of Cicero* on a similar occasion. My friend Mr. Newcomb, too, has regretted more than once to me, that you would not allow him the honour to prefix your name to his collection of poems, or suffer yourself to be known to the world as the patron of them, any otherwise than by asterisks, and the praises he has so justly bestowed upon you. As in these instances (and I dare say in many others, for ingenious men will be intruding their labours upon you), you carried that excessive modesty which I know you have espoused in theory very strongly into practice, I durst not venture to ask your permission of inscribing my Nightly Thoughts to you, nor transgress beyond what I thought might be agreeable to you, in the manner of addressing you. But as the enclosed verses contain a panegyric that is real not fictitious, and your extraordinary qualities did naturally pour them upon the thought of the writer, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of expressing to you in private that esteem which would perhaps have offended you, when laid before the public view. I hope you will pardon a trouble that proceeds from the truest respect of your

" Much indebted humble servant,

" E. YOUNG." <sup>1</sup>

With this letter are preserved the verses to which Young refers, but as many words are missing owing to a defect in the manuscript, it is almost impossible to make sense of the poet's "panegyric." The lines that are intelligible describe Mr.

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 35350, f. 1.

Yorke's "young brow" as being with "rich tiara crowned" and proclaim him as the "first Epistolograph" of the "Letter-writing tribe."

For the fourth *Night Thought*, which was entitled *The Christian Triumph*, Young wrote the preface already alluded to, a preface which seemed to indicate the conclusion of the series of poems. "It is evident from the First Night," he said, "where three deaths are mentioned, that the plan is not yet completed; for two only of those three have yet been sung. But, since this Fourth Night finishes one principal and important theme, naturally arising from all three, namely, the subduing our fear of death, it will be a proper pausing-place for the reader, and the writer too. And it is uncertain whether Providence, or inclination, will permit him to go any farther."

Perhaps Young would have assured himself greater fame had he rested at that "pausing-place" and been content to finish his poem with his exposition of "our only cure for the fear of death," for *The Christian Triumph* does naturally round off his theme. Old age, he argued, had nothing to fear from death, for even if life held some measure of happiness there came the inevitable hour when it could "yield no more." For himself that time had come; his world was dead; he had learnt the folly of those who waited on the favour of princes; so he "cheapens life" to "abate the fear of death." He was, too, resigned to his rural retirement.

"Blest be that hand divine, which gently laid  
My heart at rest, beneath this humble shed.  
The world's a stately bark, on dangerous seas,  
With pleasure seen, but boarded at our peril.  
Here, on a single plank, thrown safe ashore,  
I hear the tumult of the distant throng,  
As that of seas remote, or dying storms:  
And meditate on scenes more silent still;  
Pursue my theme, and fight the fear of Death.  
Here, like a shepherd gazing from his hut,  
Touching his reed, or leaning on his staff,  
Eager ambition's fiery chace I see;



“ Hope, eager hope, th’ assassin of our joy,  
All present blessings treading under foot.”

*Night Thoughts, V. II.*

From the design by THOMAS STOTHARD



I see the circling hunt, of noisy men,  
 Burst law's inclosure, leap the mounds of right,  
 Pursuing, and pursu'd, each other's prey ;  
 As wolves, for rapine ; as the fox, for wiles ;  
 Till Death, that mighty hunter, earths them all."

But how had he conquered the fear of death ? Not merely by musing on the vanity of struggling for the triumphs of an hour, or meditating on the tomb to which even royal glory was destined, or realising the utter folly of an aged man attempting to cling to the present, but by fixing his gaze on Calvary and the Resurrection.

" In his blest life,  
 I see the path, and, in his death, the price,  
 And in his great ascent, the proof supreme  
 Of immortality."

As he dwells upon that thought his muse takes fire, he pours out his soul in rapturous praise, he calls upon the universe to wonder and admire, and rebukes those whom that high theme leaves frigid and indifferent.

" Oh ye cold-hearted, frozen formalists !  
 On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm ;  
 Passion is reason, transport temper, here.  
 Shall heaven, which gave us ardour, and has shown  
 Her own for man so strongly, not disdain  
 What smooth emollients in theology  
 Recumbent virtue's downy doctors preach,  
 That prose of piety, a lukewarm praise ?  
 Rise odours sweet from incense uninflamed ?  
 Devotion, when lukewarm, is undevout ;  
 But when it glows, its heat is struck to heaven."

Remembering Young's remark, quoted above, to the effect that he was uncertain whether he would proceed any further with his theme, it is hardly surprising that his publisher should have concluded the series was at an end and have decided to make one volume of the four instalments. This was the first collected version of the *Night Thoughts*, and the demand was so great that six editions were called for in about as many

months. Town and country alike approved ; from his rural retreat William Shenstone expressed the general verdict when he wrote : “ Dr. Young’s *Complaint* is the best thing that has come out this season (‘ these twenty years,’ Pope says) except mine, for so *thinks* every author, who does not think proper to say so.”

For nearly six months not a line reached the poet from his friends at Bulstrode, the chief reason of the Duchess of Portland’s silence being the illness and death of her youngest daughter, Lady Frances Bentinck, who died on the last day of the February of 1743. Young knew nothing of this bereavement until the 2nd of June, on which day he resumed his correspondence with her Grace. His reference to Mrs. Montagu was no doubt occasioned by the fact that she was expecting to become a mother.

“ After so long silence your Grace’s letter gave me the greatest pleasure. Had I known or guessed the melancholy reason you assign for not writing, I should not have denied myself the honour of writing to you ; but I was really afraid your Grace had taken something ill.

“ You are pleased, Madam, to begin your letter with a reflection both on my understanding and gratitude. I do assure your Grace that I do, and ever shall look on your correspondence, as I ought, not only as a great honour, but real entertainment, too. What you are pleased to say about Miss Lee is extremely kind, and if I wish her well, I must obey your Grace’s commands in it.

“ As I take it, Madam, I am directly in your way to Nottinghamshire ; and why should you put yourselves to an inconveniency to avoid me ? I do assure you, I will neither hurt you, nor myself ; I will receive you, as I ought to entertain, not as your Grace ought to be entertained. I heartily rejoice with Mrs. Montagu, whose truly polite merits I know and admire ; and whose virtues, with the world for my rival, I shall ever honour.

“ As for the advice your Grace gives me about preferment,



I take it with all my heart. What God Almighty is pleased to give I shall receive with the greatest gratitude, nor shall I repine at what He is pleased to deny, if His mercy is pleased to continue to me His grace and my understanding.

"Your Grace pays me a high compliment in desiring a long letter; nothing but good sense can make such a one agreeable to your Grace, and to say the truth, at present I have no sense to spare. Madam, I have been confined to my bed for five weeks with the most acute distemper, and all the severities those butchers, surgeons, are able to inflict. I have gone through twenty nights, and not had twenty hours' sleep, nor am I yet at all come to my rest, or strength, though, I bless Almighty God, they tell me I'm past all danger.

"This discipline has so beaten down my spirits and understanding, that, had I not a strong inclination to write to your Grace, after so long a time, I should not have been able to do it. Pardon, therefore, Madam, the nothingness of what I write; please to accept my duty and goodwill now, and please to give me credit a little longer for my long arrear of common understanding."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding her silence, it is obvious from the foregoing that the duchess had not relaxed her efforts to secure promotion for her friend. That she was also anxious to see him again is plain from his letter of the 25th of August.

"I beg my humble duty to my Lord Duke, and a thousand thanks for all his favours, particularly for his last. How much I am obliged to you both! I hope, Madam, the cause of those low spirits your Grace complained of when I had the honour of your last letter no longer subsists. Your Grace is so kind as to invite me to Bulstrode; if any friend of mine, and of my standing, should acquaint me that he was going to make one in such a gay assembly, I should smile at him, in my sleeve, for a fool, who knew not his time of day, and forgot that his holidays were over. But your Grace's desires are commands, and your commands are sacred. I propose to

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 275.

myself the honour of waiting on your Grace the latter end of next month, if that is agreeable to you.

“ I have made a short excursion, or I should sooner have acknowledged those favours which lay me under so great an obligation ; but I met with no such pleasing and surprising pictures of Art and Nature as your Grace sets before me in your two last letters ; one would wonder how barren rock should furnish nutriment to support those large flourishing trees of which your Grace takes notice. These are strange sights, but not so strange as to see a rich overgrown miser, who could purchase half a county, where Nature shows us these rarities—it is not, I say, Madam, so strange to see groves feeding on rocks, as to see that miser dining on a flintstone, which is a sight I have been lately honoured with in my travels ; and the worst part of the story is, I was obliged to dine with him, or starve. Perhaps your Grace may desire to know the difference between these two ; as the question is difficult, I must defer the resolution of it till I have the honour of seeing you.

“ All the news I can tell your Grace is, that I’ve lately conversed with a most extraordinary person, Dr. Taylor, the famous oculist. He is a member of every university in Europe but his own ; he talks all languages but his own, and has an extreme volubility of tongue ; but it is like the volubility of the machine with which they winnow corn—I have forgot its name—and is excellent at throwing dust in our eyes. In a word his tongue is as well qualified to blind understandings, as his hand is to put out our sight. My near neighbour, and valued friend, Sir Jeremy Sambroke, who has been blind twenty years, is now under his operations, but with such ill success that we are willing to compound for his life, which was once thought in danger. Madam, may the gracious wing of Providence be ever stretched out over Bulstrode, and may I find all as safe there when I have the honour of waiting on you, as I now wish you, or, which is the same thing, as I wish myself.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 275-6.

Young's visit to Bulstrode was delayed longer than he had anticipated, one cause being the death of his stepson, Mr. Lee, which necessitated an interview with his lawyers in London. Another was his anxiety for his friend, Sir Jeremy Sambroke, from whose seat at Gubbins, the gardens of which were so highly praised by Horace Walpole, he wrote to the duchess early in September. It seems, however, that he had met her Grace in town; hence his inquiry after the health of her eldest son, the Marquis of Titchfield, who was now in his sixth year.

"I think it my duty to ask your Grace's pardon for not waiting on you as I promised. Madam, I received a visit that prevented it, I mean the visit of a violent cold, which stays with me longer than 'tis welcome. I was forced by it to leave the town for clearer air; I thank God, I am better since I came to this place, but not well.

"The day after I saw your Grace I waited on the Archbishop, who told me that my Lord Duke of Portland was very much my friend, but that nothing was to be done without the Duke of Newcastle or Lord Carteret, and presented me with his own good wishes in the handsomest manner; for which I humbly thank my Lord Duke and your Grace. I really believe the Archbishop is my friend, but your Grace knows 'tis dangerous trusting the clergy.

"If, Madam, I have the honour of hearing from you at this place, where I design continuing some time with my friend, Sir Jeremy Sambroke, I desire to know how my Lord Titchfield does, who was ill when I saw your Grace. Perhaps you expect some entertainment, but, Madam, I am neither in a merry, nor in a philosophical mood. Water gruel spoils my mirth, and an eternal cough interrupts my philosophy.

"This minute I have the comfort of hearing that preferment is come very near me, that is, Madam, that my next neighbour, the minister of Hatfield, is made Canon of Windsor. I left, Madam, Miss Lee in town, but I do not design her the honour of waiting on your Grace till I return to introduce her. I beg my humble duty to my Lord Duke, and hope

your Grace will pardon this nothing from an invalid. I was blooded this day, and to-morrow begin running the gauntlet through all the rods of an apothecary's shop. You see, Madam, how dear we pay for life; one would think there was something very valuable in it, yet ninety-nine in a hundred find it otherwise, nor can it be truly valuable to any but those who have something still more valuable as their principal point of view. You will pardon this if you consider that I write on a Sunday." <sup>1</sup>

Later in the same month he had to proffer another apology for not journeying to Bulstrode, and in this letter he made characteristic play with a request from the duchess for "a translation." To what bishopric? he asked. "I do not hear that his Grace of Canterbury is ill."

"Madam, I should have had the honour of waiting on you before now, had not a very melancholy accident happened to prevent me. The plague rages in foreign nations, and there the sword is drawn, while we sit smiling under our vines and fig-trees. Yet some calamities come on board our little island. There is a young man to whom I wish extremely well, nor is he altogether undeserving in himself, nor, I think, quite a stranger to your Grace; he is going to be married, and my hands are chosen to be embued in the blood of his precious peace. The nuptials are to be the latter end of this week at Putney. As soon as they are over, and I recovered from the formidable duty, I propose setting out for Bulstrode, so famous for nightingales.

"On reviewing your Grace's letter, I find you mean a translation from Rome to Britain. Madam, was I not fully satisfied that the former is by far the better see of the two, and that your Grace is absolute mistress of it, I should comply with your request. There dwells infallibility; how then can your Grace be deceived? I dare say, if Lucifer himself was to write in darkest characters to any Protestant king in Christendom, the Roman Chair would undertake to decipher it.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 276-7.

" However, if your Grace only means to inquire whether I understand Seneca as well as yourself, I will venture to expose myself to you, by letting you know that I take his meaning to be, that he is a fool that is seeking preferment at my time of day, and that success, should I have it, would only convince me that it deserved not so much trouble in the pursuit." <sup>1</sup>

No sooner had he paid his long-promised visit than he was called to London once more in connection with his Wharton annuities' law suits, but the part of his letter of the 29th of October which referred to that business has been quoted on a previous page. <sup>2</sup> The book Young wished to re-borrow was Bishop Gastrell's *Moral Proofs of the Certainty of a Future State*, and his eagerness to return to its pages indicates that he was occupied with the continuation of the *Night Thoughts*.

" If affairs permit me the honour of seeing Bulstrode again this season, I will bring with me Mrs. Donellan's packet, as a charm against any misadventures on my journey. I will not say, as the religious carry relics, for that is making a saint of her, whereas I really think her only the very best of sinners. If she is not content with that character, I am sorry for it, for it is the tip-top of what our Church admits.

" This afternoon I waited on Mr. Virtue; he showed me a thousand things that pleased me much; but nothing half so pleasing as the simplicity of his own manners, and the integrity of his heart; he has engraved himself in my memory and esteem for ever.

" Captain Cole was with him yesterday, but he was not very well. Miss Cole is in my head; perhaps, when I see her, she may change her apartment. I have not yet embraced my friend at your Grace's gate, but I sent him an apology, and he says that for the sake of the blessed family he will forgive me. If your Grace would knit the friendship stronger between me and Josiah, that I think is his name, I humbly

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS. i, 277-8.*

<sup>2</sup> p. 62.

beg you to send to him Bishop Gastrell's work I borrowed, for I cannot get it in town, and I much want to consult it once more on a particular exigence. I will call on Josiah for it; and consult him about the immortality of the soul, and I will return the book safe and sound with his comment when I have the honour to see your Grace." <sup>1</sup>

There is something enigmatic about Young's next letter to the duchess, written on November the 20th, after a second visit to Bulstrode that autumn; perhaps the most feasible explanation is that some of the ladies there had played him a practical joke by hiding among his belongings one of the duchess's implements of needlework.

"Such and so frequent are the calamities of human life, that, be our conduct never so correct, our station never so high, they one day or other will infallibly hook us in. Oh, Madam! The Hook! The Hook! Why was it not advertised? Why not a reward proposed? Why not the Germanic Empire that reward? But alas! in its present situation it would never have brought it, unless the finder had been as honest as the lady in the C——t Street.

"Madam, I have diligently sought it high and low, but in vain. I looked for it in the presents of inferiors; in the *Nolo episcopari* of Bishops; in speeches from the throne; in the self-condemnations of fine ladies; but in vain. I found in all of them a hook; but a hook that was by no means a mystery.

"Your Grace's hook is all-mysterious. I therefore diligently sought it in every page of the Revelations, but not one page could tell any tale or tidings of it.

"Yet, Madam, do not despair. I hear the daemon of Bulstrode gallery, that old friend of mine, whisper in my ear—'It shall be found.' And lo! here it is.

"I heartily congratulate your Grace on this most happy and surprising recovery of your dear hook, and beg my heartiest

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 278-9.

congratulations to the two ladies who doubtless have long wept the supposed loss.

"I beseech your Grace to be more careful for the future, and not to throw the world into so terrible a panic any more."<sup>1</sup>

From his last letter of this year, written on the 10th of December, it would appear that the episode of the hook had led to some merry recriminations among the ladies at Bulstrode, and also that, inspired by the repeated efforts of his friends, Young was sharing their keen interest in the prospects of his promotion. It will be observed that by this date his friend Mrs. Pendarves had become the wife of Dr. Delany.

"Such is the dangerous excellency of your Grace's understanding, that a man proves himself quite a hero who dares to converse with you. What will become of my poor unarmed, naked simplicity in so unequal a combat? Why am I thrown in panics when there is no danger near me? Why am I told of impending tempests? Why am I told of ladies in displeasure, when I am satisfied their opinions are at peace with me?

"As for Mrs. Donellan, I am not only not afraid of her anger, but I am confident of her goodwill, for is it possible her discernment can stop short of the real meaning of my heart? I therefore defy your Grace's pair of bellows, they may puff the coal of enmity between us, till they burst. 'Tis all in vain. Mrs. Donellan always thinks justly; and therefore I am safe.

"As for Lady Peterborough I have a high sense of the favour of her good wishes. But how came I by them? Her great goodness gave them to me purely as a human creature in distress, so that, though they did me a great honour, yet did they a much greater to herself.

"As for Mrs. Delany, she is very kind in giving me a place in her remembrance, and please, Madam, to let her know, for she is a great stranger to the secret, let her know, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 279.

that as long as the prime virtues, decencies, and elegancies, and arts of life preserve their due estimation in the world, by no one who ever had once the happiness of knowing her, will she ever be forgot.

“As to the last part of your Grace’s letter I perfectly understand it, and am extremely obliged by it; but if your Grace defers till the great world is settled, I shall wear a mitre in the millennium. The Duke of Newcastle is our Pope. Ecclesiastics are under his thumb, and he is as fixed as St. Paul’s, by his own weight, in spite of all the revolutions of the little court buildings round about him.”<sup>1</sup>

In the preface to the fourth of the *Night Thoughts* Young had stated that the “uneasiness” which had prompted him to begin those poems had “ceased,” and indeed such an inference might have been made from the buoyant tone of *The Christian Triumph*. But his victory over the fear of death was not of long continuance. Memory persisted in returning to Narcissa’s tomb.

“I, who late,  
Emerging from the shadows of the grave,  
Where grief detain’d me prisoner, mounting high,  
Threw wide the gates of everlasting day,  
And call’d mankind to glory, shook off pain,  
Mortality shook off, in ether pure,  
And struck the stars; now feel my spirits fail;  
They drop me from the zenith; down I rush,  
Like him whom fable fledg’d with waxen wings.”

Hence the fifth *Night Thought*, which was published in the December of 1743, bears the appropriate sub-title of *The Relapse*. Its themes were—

“Th’ importance of contemplating the tomb;  
Why men decline it; suicide’s foul birth;  
The various kinds of grief; the faults of age;  
And death’s dread character.”

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 279-80.



There is no necessity to follow the poet through his exposition of those sombre themes, but *The Relapse* contains several autobiographical allusions which deserve attention. It is inscribed to the Earl of Lichfield, the Viscount Quarendon already mentioned who had now succeeded to his father's title, and who was the son of Young's brother-in-law. The poet was satisfied that Lord Lichfield assented to the truths he had sung, and in addressing him added the lines—

"Narcissa, not unknown, not unallied,  
By virtue, or by blood, illustrious youth!"

Nor is that the only reference in the poem which helps to establish the identity of his stepdaughter Elizabeth with Narcissa, for after describing how "weeping fathers build their children's tomb" he adds, "me thine, Narcissa," though in another place he suggests that she was not actually of his flesh and blood.

But the chief biographical interest of *The Relapse* is to be found in its closing passage, in which the poet narrates a fable of Lysander and Aspasia for the sake of insisting upon the happiness of those lovers who die together. The inevitable had happened; meditating on the loss of Narcissa had brought back the memory of his greater sorrow.

"The distant train of thought I took, to shun,  
Has thrown me on my fate."

Not for him the lot of Lysander and Aspasia "undivorced by death"; his was the bitter grief of learning,

"O ne'er to meet, or ne'er to part, is peace."

And on that note he ends. He cannot trust himself to speak of his departed wife further than to lament the sundering of those tender ties which bound her to his heart.

In the first of his new year letters to the Duchess of Portland, written on the 17th of January, 1744, Young returned to the metaphor of his last epistle of the old year, but closed in a more serious vein owing to his having to refer to the death of his stepson, Mr. Lee.

“ Your Grace is pleased to complain in your last that I call you an incendiary. I could prove you such in more senses than one, but you expect I should retract ; I will, and to make you full amends, please accept the title of an extinguisher. What can quench honest ambition more, than robbing it of emulation, and hiding laudable example from its sight ? Has Dr. Delany been with your Grace a month, and does your Grace mention him, and *mention him only* ? Why did you mention him at all ? Had you not, you then might have robbed me, and I known nothing of the felony ; but now I am robbed, and murdered my strong and just desire of receiving the character of so distinguished a person from so distinguished a pen. But your Grace can set this right in your next, and I humbly hope you will.

“ As for Mrs. Delany, I grieve for her indisposition : what pity 'tis that one who can't but give pleasure, should ever suffer pain ! As for Lady Peterborough, I should endeavour to cultivate my better acquaintance with her, was I not apprehensive of too powerful a rival in the Pope ; and who would be a pretender in vain ? As for Mrs. Donellan, I suppose your Grace was afraid to commit the very bright things she was pleased to say to your own bright style, lest both together should set the paper on fire. Madam, I rejoice at heart for my Lord Duke's recovery ; my humble duty to him ; Caroline gives her duty to your Grace. Next to his poor wife, she is the greatest sufferer, an only sister, and most beloved. Thus you see, Madam, though we begin gaily, we end otherwise. Death steals into the latter end of my letter, though he has hitherto spared the latter end of my life, nor can so bright an assembly of ladies, though they hate him, quite fright him away. Had their meanest admirers no other rival, they would certainly carry their point.”<sup>1</sup>

Although at the date of his next letter, written in February, Young must have completed the sixth of the *Night Thoughts*, he makes no reference to his literary labours. His mind, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 280.

was more occupied with present preferment than future fame. The Lady Andover to whom he pays so great a compliment was the eldest daughter of the famous Colonel James Graham, who had married her cousin, the Earl of Berkshire. Her mother was the beautiful Dorothy Howard whom Evelyn eulogised so highly for her charms and virtues.

"I know what pain is, and am heartily sorry for poor Mr. Achard, and wish I was more sorry still. We feel not enough for one another, considering who felt such extremities for us all. Afflictions, as your Grace most truly observes, have their use with regard to another scene; and give me leave to add, they have their excellent use with regard to this scene too; they soften the heart, and make us more humane, they humble the heart, and make us sensible of blessings in that situation which was insipid to use before. The bare cessation of pain, if acute, gives us a pleasure nothing else can give, and the bare remembrance of it is the best preservative against needless disgusts, and the most effectual counsellor for prudent caution, through the remaining part of our lives.

"Madam, I shall be proud of the honour of being introduced to my Lord Cornbury when I wait on your Grace in town. When that will be, I am yet uncertain. As for Lady Andover, she is a person every good man would, I think, be glad to be acquainted withal, if for nothing else, yet for this, that angels, those beings of a nature so remote from his, and unlike his own, might give him hereafter the less surprise. This may look like a high-flown compliment; what I mean by it is a plain and serious truth; there is, if I mistake not, a sort of unterrestrial softness, sweetness, elegance and ease in her composition; painters, for their superior beings, would steal such a face, and philosophers, to form the juster notions of their excellence, would contemplate such a mind.

"I humbly thank your Grace for your kind and well-judged advice with regard to your excellent cousin. He is not the man I meant; a less exceptionable character is fitter for

my purpose. Your Grace's time for speaking is mine; I absolutely acquiesce in your goodness and judgment about it. But I should think that a promise is like money, it carries interest, and the sooner it is procured, the richer in hope we should be.

“Madam, I have the honour to acquaint you ladies in town, that it is spring in the country; that every day your rivals, the flowers, exceedingly increase, and threaten your empire; but I believe their menaces are vain. Mankind, who take upon them to hold the balance of power between you, are too great profligates to let rural innocence prevail. They are not so much for fair maids in February, as fair maids round the year. So that I consider myself as an unrivalled Sultan, I am just now going to take a walk in my seraglio, and which will be the happy daisy I cannot yet tell.”<sup>1</sup>

Several months passed ere Young wrote to the duchess again, but for some fifteen years onward from this period the blanks in his correspondence with her Grace are partially filled in with his epistles to Samuel Richardson. It is highly probable that the novelist and the poet were friends of old standing by 1744, for as Richardson printed a paper for the Duke of Wharton in 1723, it is at least feasible that Young may have made his acquaintance then. Another link between the two was Arthur Onslow, the famous Speaker of the House of Commons, to whom *The Complaint* was dedicated, for it was by his interest that Richardson secured the printing of the *Journals* of the lower house. Apart from the testimony of their correspondence, it might have been inferred that the author of the *Night Thoughts* would find much to admire in the author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, for each was prone to sentimental moralising, and neither realised that the half may sometimes be greater than the whole. As will be seen later, Young and his stepdaughter, Caroline Lee, were often the guests of Richardson, either at his Salisbury Court house or his country home at North End. The first of his surviving

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 281.

letters, dated from Welwyn on the 20th of April, 1744, indicates that the poet had been on a recent visit to the author of *Pamela*, who had commissioned his friend to carry back to Miss Lee a handsomely-bound copy of that novel.

"I have been much out of order, and good deal in your way. My nerves were so tender, that a door clapt, or a dog running before me, on a sudden, gave me a shock which I did not understand before. I bless God, I am much better, but not well. A great laziness and lowness hangs on me. I have several years been much out of order about this time, nor knew (till I read yours) that the equinox had anything to do with it; but I believe it has. I am heartily sorry that you bear so strong a testimony on that side of the question. Caroline has just now read you over in your new and splendid suit, with which you was so kind as to present her; and she is too much a woman not to like you still better for being so well dressed. May the lesser felicities of life, joined to those of your good heart, ever give you cause to rejoice! There is self-interest in this wish; for I shall partake in your satisfaction."<sup>1</sup>

Two new poems were added to the *Night Thoughts* this year, the first and second parts of *The Infidel Reclaimed*, thus increasing the total of the series to seven. The first of these, significantly inscribed to Henry Pelham, the brother of the Duke of Newcastle, and at this date Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, was published in April. Although, in unison with his preface, in which Young argued the vital importance of a belief in immortality, the poem is largely concerned with the vanity of earthly riches and glory, and deduces the certainty of a future life from the yearly resurrection of Nature—

"All, to re-flourish, fades;  
As in a wheel, all sinks, to re-ascend.  
Emblems of man, who passes, not expires"—

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 1-2.

there is one passage of supreme interest to the student of the poet's life. In his opening lines he at last forced himself to write of the third death which he had long shunned—that of his wife—and his description of her protracted illness and the tense anxiety of his own foreboding is eloquent proof of the depth of his affection.

“She (for I know not yet her name in heaven)  
 Not early, like Narcissa, left the scene ;  
 Nor sudden, like Philander. What avail ?  
 This seeming mitigation but inflames ;  
 This fancied med'cine heightens the disease.  
 The longer known, the closer still she grew ;  
 And gradual parting is a gradual death.  
 'Tis the grim tyrant's engine, which extorts,  
 By tardy pressure's still-increasing weight,  
 From hardest hearts, confession of distress.  
 O the long, dark approach through years of pain,  
 Death's gallery ! (might I dare to call it so)  
 With dismal doubt, and sable terror, hung ;  
 Sick hope's pale lamp its only glimm'ring ray !  
 There fate my melancholy walk ordain'd,  
 Forbid self-love itself to flatter there.  
 How oft I gazed, prophetically sad !  
 How oft I saw her dead, while yet in smiles !  
 In smiles she sunk her grief to lessen mine.  
 She spoke me comfort, and increased my pain.  
 Like powerful armies trenching at a town,  
 By slow, and silent, but resistless sap,  
 In his pale progress gently gaining ground,  
 Death urged his deadly siege ; in spite of art,  
 Of all the balmy blessings nature lends  
 To succour frail humanity. Ye stars !  
 (Not now first made familiar to my sight)  
 And thou, O moon ! bear witness ; many a night  
 He tore the pillow from beneath my head,  
 Tied down my sore attention to the shock,  
 By ceaseless depredations on a life  
 Dearer than that he left me. Dreadful post  
 Of observation, darker every hour !  
 Less dread the day that drove me to the brink,  
 And pointed at eternity below.”

When Young resumed his correspondence with the Duchess of Portland on the 19th of May he was obliged to answer an inquiry as to a rumour concerning the engagement of his step-daughter. Rumour had not lied. A gallant army officer, William Haviland by name, who had already undergone his baptism of fire, had made a conquest of Miss Lee's heart and received her promise to become his wife. From another passage in this letter it is clear that the duchess was still persisting in her efforts to secure the advancement of her friend. His humorous reference to the younger son of the Bulstrode household, Lord Edward Bentinck, who was but nine weeks old, indicates that Young had already styled him the "Archbishop" of the family, under which title the infant frequently appears in subsequent letters.

"I rejoice that your Grace found Bulstrode so delightful, at the worst it is a beauty. To be pleased with one's own is the greatest wisdom of human life, and to have reason to be so is the greatest happiness of it. But to balance this pleasure, your Grace has lost your friend, to whom you give the epithet of amiable; amiable is the softest word in our language, and therefore by far the most proper for Lady Andover.

"Your Grace enquires with great goodness after my health; thanks to Mr. Achard, to whom my very humble service, I am well blest with so much indisposition only, as is, I hope, sufficient to keep me out of the danger of thinking myself immortal. What your Grace says of the battle carries in it so much humanity that it is quite worthy of a duchess; or rather such sentiments make duchesses, without coronets, of every lady by whom they are entertained.

"Another instance of your Grace's great goodness is thinking of poor Caroline; I believe the thing is past retrieve; by my direction she has written to Lord Lichfield to acquaint him with it. She has not yet received his Lordship's answer; when she does, your Grace shall know it.

"Your Grace should not have been at the trouble of

transcribing your letter to your cousin. Though seeing is believing, yet faith is believing, too, but your Grace takes me for an infidel. I wish the Ministry did, and then I might have a better chance.

“ Your Grace’s letter to the Duke lays me under the greatest obligations ; nothing can be kinder to me, or more to the purpose ; when your correspondent can write half so well, I will certainly have the honour of waiting on him. What a lucky thing it would have been, if I, like my Lord Edward, had been born a bishop ! Poor little soul ! I wish your Grace does not find it has an ill effect on his manners ; however, I am very glad to hear that he and his little lay-relations are all well, and I beg my humble duty to their most worthy, and, as yet, most happy father. But I beg your Grace, when you are next in the way of wives, that you would forbear looking toward the Bench, though his Grace of Canterbury is really a comely person ; for indeed, Madam, to have a second child marked with a mitre, might occasion suspicion, and cause mischief without the assistance of an Iago to promote it.

“ Caroline gives her humble duty, and looks like a fool, as she ought to. If she performs as well every part of her duty in a married state, she will make the best of what, I fear, is but a bad bargain.”<sup>1</sup>

Although more than six months had passed since Young had imagined himself “ safe to land ” from his lawsuit tempests, his letter of the 29th of May shows that that happiness was still deferred.

“ It is with great feeling of heart that I look back on my Lord Duke’s, and your Grace’s late uncommon goodness to me. On Saturday I waited on my Lady Oxford to thank her for bringing you into the world. I could not get out of town till Saturday evening. The town is a great net, where honest men are caught like flies, and know not how to disentangle their integrity ; and where knaves sit, like spiders, spending

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 282.



their vitals in spinning out snares of iniquity. These spiders are of various kinds. Some only poison the principles of those they catch ; these spiders nest in the Grecian, and at White's. Others are sure to suck the blood of those they get into their clutches. One of the first sort I saw crawling on Mrs. Montagu's fair bosom. I would fain have brushed it off ; but astonishing to say ! I found she was fond of the monster, and it has worked its way quite into her breast, and is quite visible in that fair and sweet repository, like a spider enclosed in amber. But give me leave to say, that amber the most illustrious, so poisoned, will soon, with all the better part of the world, quite lose its power of attraction.

" As to the second sort of spiders, the blood-suckers, they nest chiefly in the Inns of Court, and Westminster Hall ; two or three of these lately seized on me at once, and played their parts so well, that it is almost incredible to think how much I am reduced.

" But it is some comfort to me to consider that your Grace may be a gainer by both these calamities. Your Grace has a collection of philosophical rarities ; clap Mr. M—— into one corner of your cabinet, as a spider enclosed in amber ; and hang me up in some old clock-case, for a skeleton ; then laugh at Sloane.

" And now, Madam, is it not a most melancholy consideration, that I must soon be re-entangled in this horrid cobweb of the town ? I will live there, like a tortoise, in a box ; but it shall be a box of Irish oak, that spiders may not come near me." <sup>1</sup>

So many pathetic accounts have been given of the solitary life Young was supposed to have spent at Welwyn that the opening paragraph of his next letter to Richardson is an unusually welcome corrective. It reveals him, too, as the friend of Sarah Fielding, the sister of the famous novelist, for from his reference to that lady's *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, which was not published until thirteen years later,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 282-3.

it is obvious she must have entrusted him with her manuscript. The allusion to the *Last Night* indicates that the poet was well ahead of his printers, while the remark about Lovelace is a reminder that Richardson was in the throes of *Clarissa*. The letter was written at Welwyn on the 9th of July.

“ My house is full of friends, that congratulate my return to life ; till now I knew not that report had buried me. But I cannot but steal from them, to let you know, this first post, how truly sensible I am of your late goodness.

“ Caroline and I by no means forget the respects we owe in Salisbury Court ; yet must I particularly insist that, when you go to North End, you let Cleopatra and Octavia know, that by their favour I was so happy, that in their company and so sweet a retirement, I thought, with Anthony, the world well lost.

“ At present, I am pretty much engaged in the *Last Night*, and hope you are no less so in your undertaking. It will have many more readers than I can expect. And he that writes popularly and well, does most good ; and he that does most good, is the best author.

“ Be not concerned about Lovelace : 'tis the likeness, not the morality, of a character we call for. A sign-post angel can by no means come into competition with the devils of Michael Angelo.

“ Heaven prosper you and yours. There are so many catching at you, and you are so unwilling to be caught, that I fear Welwyn stands a bad chance.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether the poet paid his annual visit to Tunbridge Wells this year, does not transpire ; but his letter to the duchess of the 23rd of July is proof he had taken a holiday somewhere. It would seem, indeed, that Bulstrode had been included in his excursion.

“ I am but just returned to this place (Welwyn) from a long

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 3-4.



THE AVENUE, WELWYN RECTORY GROUNDS



absence, or I should have had the honour of writing to your Grace sooner, to return the sincerest thanks for your and my Lord Duke's late great goodness to me.

"But though, Madam, I have not written *to* your Grace, I have written *for* your Grace, and ordered a copy of it to your house in town a week ago. For if I have not written for your Grace, for whom have I written? Not for ten more in the kingdom. At least, not so many as there should be. I mean not, Madam, as to the composition, but as to the subject, which is the most delightful, or the most disagreeable in the world, and which of these it shall be, the conduct of the differently-disposed readers is to determine.

"Your Grace's turn I well know, and am sure of at least a candid reader in you. If the world was eternal, and we were eternally to live in it, and that in perpetual youth, and with the conveniences, nay, the glories of life about us; though this to most would seem at first view a desirable situation, yet I am persuaded that on further consideration we should alter our opinion. For as, now that we know we shall die, the terror of it flings all our attention on what is agreeable in this world, with which we are, therefore, most unwilling to part; so, if we knew we were to live for ever here, then our attention, so perverse is man, would be busy to find out all that was disagreeable in it; that would most engage his observation, and a mind, whose observation was so engaged, would be inclined to change this scene for another.

"For my own part, Madam, I have good reason to consider myself as on the verge of that other scene; and it is a situation that is apt to give us serious thoughts, and the more serious any persons are, the more grateful must they necessarily be to those from whom they have received incontestable proofs of goodwill." <sup>1</sup>

Young's remark that he had "written *for*" her Grace of Portland referred of course to the publication of the seventh of the *Night Thoughts*, the concluding part of *The Infidel*

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 283-4.

*Reclaimed*, which was issued in the July of 1744. Remembering the great success which had been achieved by the earlier poems, his fears as to the smallness of his audience suggest that he was becoming conscious of a falling-off in the interest of his work. That his publisher, Dodsley, had already come to a similar conclusion is the natural inference from the fact that the seventh and succeeding *Nights* bore another imprint. "It is probable," surmised James Nichols, "that, as Young had seemed desirous of consolidating his remaining *Nights* into a kind of poetical treatise on the evidences of Christianity, Dodsley had refused to give him as large a sum for the copyright of the *Sixth Night*, as he had paid for any of its predecessors, and had offered him still less for the *Seventh*. As a tradesman, the publisher was right in the judgment to which he seems to have come; for though the succeeding *Nights* embody one of the ablest and most original defences of the principles and influences of Christianity that had ever appeared in our language, yet they are destitute of those strong claims on our natural sympathies which their gifted author had contrived, with consummate skill, to intertwine, in the preceding five *Nights*, between his arguments and his appeals."

For eighteenth century readers the final *Night Thoughts* doubtless deserved all Mr. Nichols' praise; yet even then there were some who divined the real reason why they were less interesting than their predecessors. Young was too copious. "I know and love the merit of his moral meanings," wrote his friend, Aaron Hill; "but am sorry that he overflows his banks, and will not remind himself (when he has said enough upon his subject), that then it is high time to stop." Even the fifth poem was one too many for Shenstone; Young's protraction of his theme reminded him of an old aunt who would "fetch a long-winded sigh with Dr. Young for a wager."

Late this year the poet visited Bulstrode again, and on his journey back to Welwyn met with an adventure which furnished him with a topic for his letter of thanks, besides providing an illustration of his own absent-mindedness.

" You took notice, I remember, that my servant looked like an ancient Briton ; I then dissented, and am now come entirely into your Grace's opinion ; for if he had been a modern Briton, he could not possibly have led me such a dance, but must necessarily have known more of his native land.

" In a word, I set out from Bulstrode about ten, rid four hours, and my man's horse stumbling at two, Tom waked, and told me he fancied we had mistook the way, and seemed to take it ill of me that I had suffered him to be my master so long ; and told me, if I would readmit him into my service, he would act in that character the first man we met, and ask him where we were ; which he did accordingly, and received in answer, that we were as far from Rickmansworth, exactly, as we were from Gerrard's Cross. On this, as I designed to ride but gently, I desired him to go to sleep again, which he did accordingly, and after some very dirty dreams, that he could not possibly be mistaken a second time, I brought him safe into an inn at Watford, about sunset.

" But I ask your Grace's pardon, and beg leave that I may now wait on you into better company. Believe, Madam, a clergyman for once ; I do assure you nothing could give me greater pleasure than hearing of his Grace's amendment. As for the ladies, they, I suppose, give more pain than they feel, and therefore my concern naturally devolves on the gentlemen. As for the little ones, I left my good Lord Archbishop a little out of order ; I hope it is over, for though he probably neither knows, or designs it, I assure your Grace, the Archbishop gives me his blessing every time I see him smile. Caroline gives her humble duty to your Grace ; I beg mine to my Lord Duke." <sup>1</sup>

To the close of this year belongs another, but undated, letter to Richardson, the chief interest of which consists in the evidence it affords of the earnestness with which Young participated in the endless discussions aroused by *Clarissa*.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 284-5.

“ Does Lovelace more than a proud, bold, graceless heart, long indulged in vice, would naturally do? No. Is it contrary to the common method of Providence, to let the best suffer the most? No. When the best do so suffer, does it not most deeply affect the human heart? Yes. And is it not your business to affect the human heart as deeply as you can? Yes.

“ Your critics, on seeing the first two or three acts of *Venice Preserved*, the *Orphan*, and *Theodosius*, would have advised that the innocent and amiable Belvidera, Monmia, and Athenais, should be made happy; and thus would have utterly ruined our three best plays.

“ But you ask, how come they then to give this advice? From ignorance, or envy, or affectation of a delicate concern and high zeal for virtue; or from such a degree of infidelity as suffers not their thoughts to accompany Clarissa any farther than her grave. Did they look farther, the pain they complain of would be removed; they would find her to be an object of envy as well as pity; and the distressed would be more than balanced by the triumphant Clarissa: and thus would they be reconciled to a story, at which their short-sighted tenderness for virtue pretends to take offence.

“ Believe me, Christians of taste will applaud your plan, and they who themselves would act Lovelace’s part, will find the greatest fault in it.<sup>1</sup>

With the new year, 1745, another lady of title appears in Young’s correspondence with the Duchess of Portland, namely, Lady Wallingford, but only those versed in the mysteries of the earldom of Banbury could establish her identity. Whoever she was, she had surprised the poet with her “goodness,” but in what respect is not clear. In the same letter he chided Mrs. Montagu for trying to pick a hole in his “philosophical surtout,” a probable reference to some criticism of the *Night Thoughts*, but he reminded his lively friend that when she stood in need of a philosophy his particular brand would

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 5-6.



"rock her pains into patience more effectually than a coach and six." Judging from his next letter to the duchess, dated the 17th of January, it would seem that the ladies at Bulstrode were pining for a visit to London.

"I find by your Grace's letter that the country, and so sweet a country as your Grace's is, is capable of having a rival, and that rival a perfect dowdy. I must needs own, that, if the country gives ladies the spleen, town is their proper remedy, that region of assafoetida. But your Grace will say it has its aromatics too; it has, but some of them are rather too strong, and all of them are apt to affect the head to its disadvantage, and to lead weak ones by the nose. But to balance all this, and ten times as much more, your Grace says, it gives you the conversation of your friends; if it does, I grant Elysium could not give you more. Your Grace mentions but two in your letter, and if a maxim I read in your Grace's book at Bulstrode be true, I am very near hating them both, for that says: 'The more a man loves any of your sex, the nearer he is to hating them.'

"As for what Mrs. Donellan says, there is so much gallantry in it, that in pure decency I must consider it as rank raillery; but I do not like it the worse for that: to be rallied by a young lady at my time of day is a favour not to be despised. And as for Lady Andover, pray, Madam, my best respects, and tell her ladyship, that by the quotation your Grace takes from her letter, I think she resembles the very beautiful youth, mentioned, as I remember, by Herodotus, who, perceiving his person had kindled a passion in a person very unfit for thoughts of that nature, thought proper to disfigure himself, to prevent a consequence he so much disapproved.

"And now, Madam, since we are at this play, pray, what is your Grace like? 'Tis very odd, yet it is very true, you are like—the destruction of Sodom: you have brought an ancient gentleman and his two daughters together, made him drunk with vanity, and were not they better and he older than somebody else, how could your Grace's goodness be

responsible for the consequences? And now, Madam, what am I like? Why I am like—no I am not like, but actually am a fool, and if your Grace does not burn this letter, I will not, I cannot forgive you.”<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the repeated efforts of his zealous friends at Bulstrode, Young was no nearer preferment than when he first entered the Church. It seems, however, from a remark in a letter of the 2nd of February, that the Duchess of Portland had secured the goodwill of John Roberts, secretary to Henry Pelham, and much was expected from that circumstance. In the same letter is a reference to Miss Lee: “Caroline gives her humble duty to your Grace; her lover is in Stirling Castle, so that she has a chance of being a widow before she is a wife.” This, it will be remembered, was the year of the Jacobite rising of '45, and Major Haviland was acting as aide-de-camp to Colonel Blakeney, who had been entrusted with the defence of Stirling Castle.

It was in a less lively mood Young wrote to Richardson the letter of the 18th of February in which he acknowledged a present from one of the admirers of the *Night Thoughts*, most probably the Mrs. Pilkington of anything but “good” repute.

“I have been under some pain ever since I received the favour of your last, or so kind a letter should not have been so long without a reply. But pain I have been acquainted with before, and have endeavoured not to be dejected under it. An even mind, undejected by ill, unelated by good, is an advice the wise Heathens inculcated as much, if not more, than any other. Nor has Scripture shown it less regard. No single piece of wisdom seems to me so strongly guarded there as this equanimity. Two noble barriers are erected against our deviation on either hand: one in the history of Solomon, who, to suppress elevation, assures us that the best is vain; one the history of Job, who tells us the worst is supportable; which truth is the present.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 286.

" I return to the good woman who favoured me with an ornament to my watch. There is a time when we should not only number our days, but our hours. Her present may stand my friend in this view: a measure of time is naturally an instrument of wisdom; and more so is the good example of a valuable and valued friend.

" This moment I hear the knell of a young gentleman and neighbour, cut off in his bloom by the small-pox. 'Tis very near us; I am afraid for Caroline, to whose family it has been very fatal.

" P.S.—As I was going to fold my letter, I heard a second knell. Asking whose it was, it proved my next neighbour's. What has man to do but to know the vanity, and avoid the vexation, of human life? Evils fly so near and so thick about us, that I'm half persuaded, my dear friend, that we should aim at little more than negative good here, and positive in another scene. Escape here, and enjoyment hereafter."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the publication of the eighth *Night Thought*, *Virtue's Apology*, in the July of this year, Young proceeded to Tunbridge Wells for a lengthy visit, the enjoyment of which was enhanced by the numerous examples of human folly to be seen at that fashionable resort. " We have," he wrote on the 21st of August, " men of seventy that represent boys of eighteen, and boys of eighteen that represent changelings, and many of your own sex that represent witches in the morning, and angels in the afternoon, and women at night." On his way through London he had secured an interview with the all-powerful Duke of Newcastle, but he prefaces his account of that event with some domestic news.

" As to poor Caroline, I fear the affair proceeds; I made her write to my Lord Lichfield, and she received a letter from him that became the prudence of his character and the nearness of his relation, but I fear it had too little effect. All I can bring her to is that she will not marry him in his present circumstances, and in that I am persuaded I may rely on her.

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 9-11.

She is at Welwyn. As for your Grace's enquiries about her I take it infinitely kind, for what but your own good heart could put them into your Grace's head?

"The Duke of Newcastle received me with great complaisance, ministerially kind, took me by the thumb as cordially as if he designed it should go for payment in full. In a word, Madam, with great civility, for which I thank your Grace, he told me the King had made some promises, and that he, the Duke I mean, had his own pre-engagements, but that he would certainly do what he could; so that if nothing is done, he has kindly prepared me for it.

"As for Mr. Roberts, he is here, he returns his humble respects for the honour your Grace does him in supposing him of consequence, and says he heard Mr. Pelham say: 'that besides my own good title, the Duchess of Portland was a person, and character, which it was very proper for both him and his brother very much to regard.' And Mr. Roberts added from himself, that, if your Grace would be so kind as to persist in your kind pressing in my favour, it must necessarily succeed; that your Grace's kind importunity would be the Duke's full excuse to competitors; that application should be made, whatever fell, or was likely to fall; that a deanery was as easy to get as a prebend, as things stand; that he would be sure to be my remembrancer with Mr. Pelham.

"Lady Oxford did me great honour by having me in her remembrance. I saunter, like your Grace, from oak to oak, but I miss many oaks I was formerly acquainted with in this place. I enquired after them of the neighbours, who tell me they are gone to sea, but that meeting foul weather in their passage, they threw the balance of Europe overboard, which was picked up by a French man-of-war."<sup>1</sup>

Her Grace of Portland had another correspondent at Tunbridge Wells in that late summer of 1745, none other than the vivacious Mrs. Montagu. And she must need tell tales of their revered and reverend friend. As thus—

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 288.

" I have great joy in Dr. Young, whom I disturbed in a reverie ; at first he started, then bowed, then fell back into a surprise, then began a speech, relapsed into his astonishment two or three times, forgot what he had been saying, began a new subject, and so went on. I told him your Grace desired he would write longer letters ; to which he cried Ha ! most emphatically, and I leave you to interpret what it meant. He has made a friendship with one person here, whom I believe you would not imagine to have been made for his bosom friend. You would, perhaps, suppose it was a bishop, a dean, a prebend, a pious preacher, a clergyman of exemplary life ; or if a layman, of most virtuous conversation, one that had paraphrased St. Matthew, or wrote comments on St. Paul ; one blind with studying the Hebrew text, and more versed in the Jewish chronicle than the English history ; a man that knew more of the Levitical law, than of the civil, or common law of England. You would not guess that this associate of the Doctor was—old *Cibber* ! Certainly in their religious, moral, and civil character, there is no relation, but in their dramatic capacity there is some. But why the reverend divine, and serious author of the melancholy *Night Thoughts*, should desire to appear as a *persona dramatis* here I cannot imagine. The waters have raised his spirits to a fine pitch, as your Grace will imagine when I tell you how sublime an answer he made to a very vulgar question. I asked him how long he staid at the Wells ? he said, as long as my rival staid. I was astonished how one who made no pretensions to anything could have a rival, so I asked him for an explanation ; he said, he would stay as long as the Sun did. He did an admirable thing to Lady Sunderland ;<sup>1</sup> on her mentioning Sir Robert Sutton, he asked her where Sir Robert's Lady was ; on which we all laughed very heartily, and I brought him off, half ashamed, to my lodgings ; where, during breakfast, he assured me he asked after Lady Sunderland, because he had a great honour for her ; and that having a respect for her sister,

<sup>1</sup> Lady Sunderland was married to Sir Robert Sutton ; Mrs. Tichborne was her sister.

he designed to have enquired after her, if we had not put it out of his head by laughing at him. You must know, Mrs. Tichborne sat next to Lady Sunderland; it would have been admirable to have had him finish his compliment in that manner.”<sup>1</sup>

A few days later Mrs. Montagu dispatched a second missive from Tunbridge Wells to the duchess, in which she gave another and more characteristic account of the author of the *Night Thoughts*.

“ I am extremely happy in Dr. Young’s company; he has dined with me sometimes, and the other day rode out with me; he carried me into places suited to the genius of his muse, sublime, grand, and with a pleasing gloom diffused over them; there I tasted the pleasure of his conversation in its full force: his expressions all bear the stamp of novelty, and his thoughts of sterling sense. I think he is in perfect good health; he practices a kind of philosophical abstinence, but seems not obliged to any rules of physic. All the ladies court him; more because they hear he is a genius, than that they know him to be such. I tell him I am jealous of some ladies that follow him; he says, he trusts my pride will preserve me from jealousy. The Doctor is a true philosopher, and sees how one vice corrects another till an animal, made up of ten thousand bad qualities, by ‘ th’ eternal art of educing good from ill,’ grows to be a social creature, tolerable to live with.”<sup>2</sup>

Judging from his second epistle from Tunbridge Wells, dated the 17th of September, Young was not inspired to a “ longer letter ” on that occasion. But he defended himself effectually for fraternising with his old theatrical friend, Colley Cibber.

“ I pretend not to instruct by my letters, but to obey, and to stand candidate for your good opinion, by showing

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, iii, 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

my sentiments close with your own. As for poor Colley, his impudence diverts me, and his morals shall not hurt me, though, by the way, he is more fool than knave, and like other fools, is a wit. He has a little wit, a little humour, and a little knowledge, and will lose none on 't.

"Pray to how many better companions can your Grace help me, within the bills of mortality? It was prudery in Mrs. Montagu to tell tales, and 'tis your Grace's compliment to her prudery to take notice of it. I honour Mrs. Montagu for what is truly valuable in her, which is much; yet have I writ a satire on her in my heart, but racks shall not extort it from me. Lady Murray I have long known something of, and love her, but your duchess deserves not so much of your esteem. I propose, Madam, staying here as long as the weather will permit, and then, after a few days spent in London, waiting on your Grace. Your kind concern for poor Caroline is an obligation to me, who am anxious for her welfare. . . . Mrs. Montagu's 'many people, and little company' is prettily and truly said; but let her not complain, she shines the more, she has often held me by the ear till all about her were annihilated, and, in a numerous assembly, there was neither company nor person but herself. There have been two or three ladies more here whose sense is not amiss. Mr. Roberts, Madam, is gone. Your Grace will soon hear from Mrs. Montagu; she is much better for the waters. I know more of her than ever I did before; she has an excellent and uncommon capacity, which ambition a little precipitates, and prejudice sometimes misleads, but time and experience may make her a finished character, for I think her heart is sound. As for your friend, Mrs. K., I esteem her, as I do the Portias and Lucretias; her fame rolls down to me through the days of old. You see, Madam, I lay myself entirely at your Grace's mercy. You may quite ruin me, if you please, with a lady in whose opinion I have an ambition of standing fair." <sup>1</sup>

Ere the month ended the poet had left Tunbridge Wells,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 288-9.

and Mrs. Montagu was inconsolable for his loss. The letter to her Grace of Portland in which she gave an account of her last excursion with Young is somewhat lengthy, but it gives such a pleasant picture of his old-world courtesy that it deserves citation in full. Doubtless the duchess was gratified to have her description of the doctor's servant as an "ancient Briton" corroborated by Mrs. Montagu.

"I have been in the vapours these two days, on account of Dr. Young's leaving us; he was so good as to let me have his company very often, and we used to ride, walk, and take sweet counsel together; a few days before he went away he carried Mrs. Rolt (of Hertfordshire) and myself, to Tunbridge, five miles from hence, where we were to see some fine old ruins; but the manner of the journey was admirable, nor did I, at the end of it, admire the object we went to observe more than the means by which we saw it; and to give your Grace a description of the place, without an account of our journey to it, would be contradicting all form and order, and setting myself up as a critic upon all writers of travels. Much

' Might be said of our passing worth,  
And manner how we sallied forth ';

but I shall, as briefly as possible, describe our progress, without dwelling on particular circumstances; and shall divest myself of all pomp of language, and proceed in as humble a style as my great subject will admit.

"First rode the Doctor on a tall steed, decently caparisoned in dark grey; next ambled Mrs. Rolt, on a hackney horse, lean as the famed Rozinante, but in shape much resembling Sancho's ass; then followed your humble servant on a milk white palfrey, whose reverence for the human kind induced him to be governed by a creature not half as strong, and, I fear, scarce twice as wise as himself. By this enthusiasm of his, rather than my own skill, I rode on in safety, and at leisure, to observe the company; especially the two figures that brought up the rear. The first was my servant, valiantly



armed with two uncharged pistols; whose holsters were covered with two civil harmless monsters that signified the valour and courtesy of our ancestors. The last was the Doctor's man, whose uncombed hair so resembled the mane of the horse he rode, one could not help imagining they were of kin, and wishing for the honour of the family they had had one comb betwixt them; on his head was a velvet cap, much resembling a black saucepan, and on his side hung a little basket. Thus did we ride, or rather jog on, to Tunbridge town, which is five miles from the Wells. To tell you how the dogs barked at us, the children squalled, and the men and women stared, would take up too much time; let it suffice, that not even a tame magpie, or caged starling, let us pass unnoted.

"At last we arrived at the King's Head, where the loyalty of the Doctor induced him to alight, and then, knight errant-like, he took his damsels from off their palfreys, and courteously handed us into the inn. We took this progress to see the ruins of an old castle; but first our divine would visit the churchyard, where we read that folks were born and died, the natural, moral, and physical history of mankind. In the churchyard grazed the parson's steed, whose back was worn bare with carrying a pillion-seat for the comely, fat personage, this ecclesiastic's wife; and though the creature eat daily part of the parish, he was most miserably lean. . . . When we had seen the church, the parson invited us to take some refreshment at his house, but Doctor Young thought we had before enough trespassed on the good man's time, so desired to be excused. . . . However, Dr. Young, who would not be outdone in good offices, invited the divine to our inn, where we went to dinner; but he excused himself, and came after the meal was over, in hopes of smoking a pipe; but our Doctor hinted to him that it would not be proper to offer any incense, but sweet praise, to such goddesses as Mrs. Rolt and your humble servant. To say the truth, I saw a large horn tobacco-box, with Queen Anne's head upon it, peeping out of his pocket, but I did not care to take the hint, and desire him to put into use that magnificent piece of furniture. . . .

“ It was late in the evening before we got home, but the silver Cynthia held up her lamp in the heavens, and cast such a light on the earth as showed its beauties in a soft and gentle light. The night silenced all but our divine Doctor, who sometimes uttered things fit to be spoken in a season when all nature seemed to be hushed and hearkening. I followed, gathering wisdom as I went, till I found by my horse’s stumbling, that I was in a bad road, and that the blind was leading the blind ; so I placed my servant between the Doctor and myself, which he not perceiving, went on in a most philosophical strain to the great amazement of my poor clown of a servant, who not being wrought up to any pitch of enthusiasm, nor making any answer to all the fine things he heard, the Doctor wondering I was dumb, and grieving I was so stupid, looked round, declared his surprise, and desired the man to trot on before ; and thus did we return to Tunbridge Wells. I can give your Grace comfort in telling you Dr. Young will be with you in a week’s time.”<sup>1</sup>

Young did not keep his promise to appear at Bulstrode in “ a week’s time.” Nay, he had not gone thither by the 25th of October, for on that date he was writing to the duchess from North End, where he was probably staying with Richardson. The first paragraph of that letter refers to the ninth and last of the *Night Thoughts*, *The Consolation*, which he was preparing for the press for publication in the first month of the coming year. He had not been able to resist indulging in “ one labour more,” though by this date he was obviously conscious that it was time the series came to an end.

“ Since, I find, your Grace is in the secret, give me leave to observe, that writers, like other sinners, when they have once give way to the first temptation, are carried farther than they designed, and sin on till they are—what, Madam ? You can guess, ’tis a bad word, and I will not shock your Grace with it.

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, iii, 17-24.

"Lady Andover does me honour in remembering that I exist. Yet 'tis all compliment; there is no sincerity, or she had not disappointed my assignation with her. Why go to town! Dishonourable creature! She is gone only with her husband!

"But your Grace, who are infinitely kind to your friends in such extremities, has taken care that the disappointment shall not prove fatal. Another mistress is the only cure, and oh, the charms, and those charms in my bedchamber, oh, the charms of a wicker chair! My Lady Duchess, if you love Lady Andover, and I think you do, and I think she is well enough for a woman's love; if you love her, I say, let her not know of this rival, a rival so irresistible, and that opens her arms, to take us wholly in, and hold us fast for hours, perhaps, fast asleep, it must make her despair; it must break, and let it, her unfaithful heart."<sup>1</sup>

Although he promised to "hasten" to Bulstrode as "soon as possible," more than another month went by ere, on the 26th of November, he was writing to Richardson to inform him of his arrival there. His reference to the Duke's endangered estate is his second allusion to the troubles of the '45 rebellion.

"After a very wet journey above and below, I arrived at this family, to arrive at which one would be glad to go through some difficulties. Virtue, prudence, peace, industry, ingenuity, and amiableness, dwell here. You will say I keep very good company; but you must know that anxiety has lately intruded, without the least invitation from folly or vice. The Duke has a considerable estate in and about Carlisle, which must have suffered much; nor can they yet see to the end of the mischief. So that the common calamity makes more than a common impression here. God Almighty send us good news and good hearts."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 290-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 11.

As in the winter of the previous year, the poet's "ancient Briton" was the cause of another adventure on the return journey to Welwyn. From his maid's greeting it would seem that Miss Lee was absent, and that Mrs. Hallows had not yet undertaken the management of his household.

"I cannot thank you too soon or too much for the late great favours received at Bulstrode, a place where a person cannot receive civilities but he must receive honours at the same time, nor can he return his humble acknowledgments without being proud under his humility. But, I assure your Grace, I am as sincere as I am proud, while I return my gratitude for your great goodness to me.

"I rid very hard, and got hence by three of the clock, which you know, Madam, is dinner time. My maid told me she was glad I came so opportunely, for by that means she thought verily that she could provide me a dinner again the next day. I suppose the wench had heard that I eat six times a day at Bulstrode and was for balancing the account, nor was this the sole felicity of my journey. My man was ill of a fever; therefore, when we came to St. Albans, he desired I would stop a minute, that he might take something, being ill; and as he said he thought his blood was much inflamed, I stopped, and left him the liberty of having what he pleased; on which he drank half a pint of hot brandy; then we put on apace, and by the time we had rid four miles, his horse stumbled, though it was the rider drank the brandy. On the jolt, Tom waked, and cried, 'Sir, I have dropped the bag!' I was in a passion at his negligence, and told him I should have nothing for dinner. 'No, sir,' says he, with great joy, 'the venison is here; I only have dropped your leather bags.' Now, Madam, in those bags was nought but my shirts, wigs, shoes, razors, etc.; in short my whole travelling estate. On being a little disgusted even at that loss, he told me, to be sure somebody must pick it up, and no doubt would bring it after us; and then trotted on with great tranquillity of mind. Whilst I was considering how I should best manage the handle

of my whip to knock him off his horse, and leave him to be picked up by the next comer, with my bags, a servant from my, and your Grace's, honest landlord at the Red Lion overtook me with what was lost ; which was left on a horse-block in his inn-yard. Now judge, Madam, if I stand in need of highlanders in order to be undone. How long it may be before they strip me of my shirt, which I so happily recovered, Heaven only knows." <sup>1</sup>

Young's return to his own roof did not terminate his excursions for 1745, for on the 10th of December he was writing to Richardson in a manner that implied he had recently paid another visit to that friend. The novelist's present for Miss Lee on that occasion was an advance copy of Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*.

" I find you and Mr. Groves (to whom my humble service) are two eels that are not to be caught ; whereas you find me a perfect gudgeon. Whenever I swim with the stream of my own inclinations, you are sure of me. However, I thank you for your superfluous care of throwing out the bait of your kind invitation. Caroline begs her best respects to Mrs. Richardson and yourself ; and many thanks for the present I brought her from you. She is far from well, but no symptoms of the disease we would particularly guard against : the disorder hangs chiefly on her spirits ; and she told me, after she had dipt into your book, that she fancied flowers and tombs were (tho' seeming so remote) as near in nature, as in that author's composition. May Almighty Providence spread its tender wing over you and yours.

" P.S.—The times and weather will mend. Fear is a passion of great use ; and I hope this juncture will habituate our countrymen to such thoughts as will mingle kindly with those of God Almighty and of death." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 291-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 14-15.

That letter, with its final sombre word, ends the poet's history for 1745. Although, as noted above, the last *Night Thought* was not to be published until the next month, he had completed the work most associated with his name with a survey of the heavens that anticipated and perhaps inspired the *Astronomical Discourses* of Thomas Chalmers. The first collected edition of the nine poems appeared four years later, and from that date onward for more than a hundred years the work was more frequently reprinted than probably any other book of the eighteenth century. It was to be translated into French, and Spanish, and Italian, and German, and Portuguese, and Swedish, and Magyar, and to give to the author's native language a larger store of familiar quotations than the verse of many poets of supposedly greater genius.

## CHAPTER VII

WELWYN AND ELSEWHERE

1746-1753

YOUNG has been blamed for inconsistency because his poetry did not harmonise with his practice. In his verse, his critics have said, and with truth, he represented himself as content with his rural life as rector of Welwyn ; yet all the time, they add, he was moving heaven and earth to secure a bishopric or a deanery. Waiving the consideration that his gifts and character should have given him precedence over many who were advanced to such honours, justice to the poet's memory demands that whatever blame may be attached to his desire for preferment should be laid at the right door. And there is no question Bulstrode was that door. On the evidence of his correspondence with the Duchess of Portland, it is clear beyond dispute that her Grace and her husband were responsible for awakening ambition in Young's breast and for keeping it alive. That evidence shows that again and again when the poet had expressed himself as resigned to his position, he was unsettled by renewed efforts on the part of his titled friends, and urged to write letters to and seek interviews with such members of the ministry as had control of church patronage.

Let that fact be counted to him for righteousness. It should also discount the seeming importunity of his letters to the Duke of Newcastle. There is every probability that his inscription of the last *Night Thought* to that ludicrous statesman was inspired by a hint from Bulstrode, for his Grace was the chief hope of the Portlands. Besides, by this date, the beginning of 1746, Young had received Newcastle's promise that as soon as two or three prior claimants were satisfied, he would consider his application. Had the Duke read the poem dedicated to himself, he might have claimed absolution from his engagement on the plea that Young had charged his soul to "leave the racers of the world their own." Perhaps it was a fear that he might draw such a conclusion from his lines

which prompted the poet to address a brief reminder to Newcastle on the 11th of January. "Will your Grace pardon me," he wrote, "if, conscious of your high engagements, and timorous of interrupting, I presume only just to subscribe myself, with the most profound respect, and humble hope of your graciously promised favour, your Grace's most obedient," etc. There was a postscript, however, in which the poet reminded Newcastle that he had been "twenty-four years on duty" (as a royal chaplain), and that the Duchess of Portland had informed him his Grace would be "kind."<sup>1</sup>

Early in the year Young waited upon his Bulstrode friend at her London house, and on returning to Welwyn was seized by an illness which delayed his usual letter of thanks. When he did write, on the 6th of April, his first thought was of the Duchess's renewed efforts to achieve his promotion.

"Your Grace's kind regard to my little interests is extremely good in you, whatever shall be the extent of these casual things, your Grace can never lose the satisfaction of having endeavoured to befriend one, whose chief title to your favour is his being deeply sensible of it. . . .

"Yesterday, Madam, the famous Mr. Whiston called on me, who prophesied severe things to this poor nation; he pretended to support himself by Scripture authority; how just his pretence I cannot absolutely say; but I think there are so many public symptoms on the side of his prophecy, as to hinder it from being quite ridiculous.

"I wish, Madam, I could at all contribute to your amusement, but sickness is a bad correspondent; however, 'tis better to have it for a correspondent than a companion. May your Grace ever keep it at a distance, yet not out of sight; for, as I take it, the sight or thought of sickness is the enjoyment of health, and half the world are unhappy under the greatest blessing Heaven can bestow, purely from forgetting that it may be taken from them."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MSS.* 32710, f. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 292.



Two months later the poet should have been in London for duty at court as one of the royal chaplains, but was detained at Welwyn, by the slowness of his convalescence. His disappointment was all the greater from his having promised to stay with the Duchess of Portland at her Whitehall mansion. Many of their friends were also ill, a fact which prompted him to write on the 12th of June :

“ Madam, I beseech you take care of your health. I have a very particular sense of the value of it at present, not only from my own want of it, but from the disorders and indispositions of my friends and acquaintances. One of them, I find, has the honour of being known to your Grace, I mean Mrs. Rolt, from whom I received last post a most melancholy letter ; her sole hope, it seems, is in Bristol waters, to which she is going, and if she should fail, her children will fall into their father’s hands, which is a most surprising way, one would think, of falling into ruin. In ancient story it is said of one Saturn, that he eat up all his children. As for my cousin Rolt, I fear he will drink up his. He has already drunk up one half of an ample estate, and seems to be exceedingly dry still, so high runs his fever, caught by perpetually basking in the too sultry beams of that sex, which seems designed by Providence for the comfort of wise men, and the ruin of fools.”<sup>1</sup>

In a postscript to this letter he reverted once more to his chances of preferment. “ When I last saw his Grace of Newcastle, he told me he had two or three to provide for before me. Three are just now preferred, but perhaps his two or three, like Falstaff’s men in buckram, may grow to nine or ten. For what fictions in the extravagance of poesy can exceed the wonderful realities in humble life ? ” Ere he wrote to the duchess again he made another personal appeal to Newcastle, the following letter being dated the 4th of July, 1746.

“ May it please your Grace—If the multiplicity of your Grace’s high affairs could permit your Grace to reflect, how severe it

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 293.

is for one of very long service and known attachment to his Majesty, after promises from those that hold them most sacred, and after all methods taken to recommend himself to your Grace's patronage, the intercession of friends, and his own attempts in letters which boast your constant favour; and at the very latter end of life, when distant expectations are no expectations, could, I say, your Grace one moment reflect how severe it is to be thrown far backward in my hopes, I am confident from your Grace's known equity and humanity, you would compassionate the case of

" May it please your Grace,  
 " Your Grace's most Obedient and humbly devoted  
 " Servant,  
 " EDWARD YOUNG." <sup>1</sup>

Again there was a postscript, this time to the effect that "both the Archbishops" were ready to testify in his favour. But he wrote in vain. Nor was Young, who seems to have been in London when he penned that epistle, successful in getting an interview with William Murray, who had now become Solicitor-General, for that brilliant advocate was too busily engaged preparing the prosecution of the rebel lords of '45. A year earlier Murray had assured her Grace of Portland that if he were Young, under her protection, he would not "despair of Windsor at least." The poet was not so hopeful; "Madam," he exclaimed, "'tis impossible, 'tis impossible, though, I confess, the Devil has sufficient footing in the world, and never fails of a good place at Court." As he wrote there was lying before him another hearty invitation to Bulstrode, where, her Grace informed him, he would have the pleasure of meeting Lady Bute, the daughter, it will be remembered, of Lady Wortley Montagu. Young had met Lady Bute before her marriage and been favourably impressed with her accomplishments and character. "I am glad," he wrote, "your Grace has the happiness of her conversation; I should be pleased and proud to partake of such a feast, but my ambition

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 32707. f. 394.

has lately met with more rebukes than one ; which should, and, I hope, will, make me wiser than to aim at anything more than humble content for the future, which is prudence at all ages, but double prudence at mine." However, he promised to wait upon the duchess as soon as he regained his health.

On the same date, July 17th, he wrote to his friend Richardson, who had promised him a visit.

" After a long absence (long I mean to my feeling), I yesterday returned home, as to a pillow, which gives me that joy in rest, of which you will not be able to entertain any idea these twenty years.

" You convince me, every day, more and more, of the singularity of your character ; your heart is, I find, set on doing good offices, and to those who are least capable of returning them. If there is any such thing as virtue, it consists in such a conduct ; and if there is any such thing as wisdom, it consists in virtue ! What else can furnish either joy or peace ? For when a man has had years, reflection, and experience enough to take off the mask from men and things, it is impossible for him to propose to himself any true peace, but peace of conscience ; or any real joy, but joy in the Holy Ghost. This, another might call preaching ; but you, Sir, must either condemn the whole tenor of your life, or allow it to be common sense.

" On his travels a very old man dines with me this day, the Rev. Mr. Watty, whose character may be briefly given by comparing him to a frosty night. There are many thoughts in him that glitter through the dominion of darkness. Though it is night, it is a starlight night ; and if you, as you have promised, should succeed him in our little hemisphere, I should welcome Richardson as returning day. In a word, I love you, and delight in your conversation, which permits me to think of something more than what I see."<sup>1</sup>

Young's journey to Bulstrode was to be delayed longer than

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 15-17.

he had anticipated. Up to this date, sixteen years subsequent to his presentation to Welwyn, he had discharged the duties of his parish single-handed, but now the increasing burden of his sixty-three years and the tardiness of returning health decided him to seek the assistance of a curate. Pending the advent of such a helper, he could not, he humorously reminded the duchess, "forget his grace the little Archbishop. What if he made his first ecclesiastical campaign in the fields of Welwyn! His innocence would recommend his doctrine to my parishioners exceedingly."

It was near the end of October ere he obtained a curate, but coincident with his arrival another obstacle presented itself. In his letter of explanation he gave a lively account of the catastrophe which had befallen Lady Cathcart, who in the previous May had taken to herself a fourth husband in the person of one Hugh Macguire, an Irish adventurer, for whom she purchased a commission in the British army. Her confinement in Ireland was to last until her husband's death in 1764, when she returned to Tewin, and in her eightieth year danced at the Welwyn assembly with all the abandon of a young woman.

"I have got myself a curate, and was preparing to set out for Bulstrode, but an unforeseen accident denies me the pleasure and honour of waiting on you, and what is still worse is that it is a public misfortune which includes my own. The murrain among the cattle is got within four miles of us, to a place called Wotton, and I am obliged with another justice to hold a sessions once or twice a week, to put the Act of Parliament in execution for preventing its spreading further, and to pay the poor sufferers what they are entitled to by that Act, provided they perform the conditions of it.

"I have, Madam, endeavoured to get a curate in this capacity also, but I find it is impossible, so that I am absolutely, confined, and for how long is quite uncertain. . . .

"The following pretty tale for a tragedy may perhaps be new to your Grace. Lady Cathcart at fifty-nine is smitten

with the gay feathers of thirty-three, and after short serenading, of billing and pruning, takes him into her nest. Thirty-three finds it very well feathered, and had a great mind to pluck some plumes of it for his private use. This made Dame Partlet bristle against him. At this the cockscomb rose and could not bear it ; it came to a little sparring, war was declared, and thirty-three must show all his generalship on this occasion. To this end he thought it prudent to strengthen himself by allies, and it happened very fortunately for him, that there was a young princess in the family of eighteen, whom fifty-nine took from the dunghill, and tossed her into a tub of soapsuds, out of which she soon rose, like Venus out of the sea, the delight of her ladyship's eyes, and the confident of her heart. This Venus fell in love with Mars ; which was very happy for him, for she returned the favours she received from him with the key of her ladyship's escritoire, where he found the will, which has made him run mad. In his distraction he snatches both away to Ireland, where the young princess personates her ladyship, who is kept out of eyesight, for fear of telling tales, and as she before discovered the undutifulness of her husband, so very lately are her eyes open as to the treachery of her bosom-friend, and yet none but these two are ever suffered to come near her. Can your Grace easily feign a greater picture of distress ? I own I cannot, and yet for this terrible sore, she neither has, nor is like to have, any other plaister than potatoes and milk." <sup>1</sup>

To the murrain among the cattle succeeded an outbreak of " a pleuretic fever " which occasioned a severe mortality among Young's parishioners, thus opposing another obstacle to his visiting Bulstrode. That his own health was re-established is clear from his letter to Richardson of November the 11th, the opening paragraph of which referred to the novelist's intimation that the first volumes of *Clarissa* would be published in the ensuing year.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 297-8.

“ I thank you for enabling me, at my time of day, to think with great pleasure of living another year. A summer bearing such fruits as you kindly give me cause to expect, may excuse me for wishing to see longer days than we at present enjoy. I consider *Clarissa* as my last amour ; I am as tender of her welfare, as I am sensible of her charms. This amour differs from all others in one respect—I should rejoice to have all the world my rivals in it.

“ The waters here are not new things ; they were in great vogue fifty years ago ; but an eminent physician of this place dying, by degrees they were forgot. We have a physician now near us who drinks them himself all the winter ; and a lady comes seven miles every morning for the same purpose. They are the same as Tunbridge ; and I myself have found from them just the same effect. . . .

“ I heartily rejoice that at length you find benefit from your tar-water. Tar by winter, and steel by summer, are the two champions sent forth by Providence to encounter, and subdue the spleen.

“ In long chronical cases, perseverance is the point ; and so it is in the greatest point of all. No man is so profligate, but he is good for moments ; perseverance only is wanting to make him a saint. As you persevere in the great point, persevere in this—to a good heart, add a good constitution ; and then you are (not only an angel) as happy as mortality can admit.

“ I bless God I am well : and I am composing, but it is in wood and stone ; for I am building a steeple to my church ; and as a wise man in everything, I expect from you, as an architect, a critique upon it. I had almost forgot to tell you, that an Irishman has run away with one of my neighbours, and that with such circumstances of intrigue and distress, than its truth alone hinders it from being an excellent romance ; just as fiction alone hinders yours from being an excellent history.

“ You say, my dear friend, that I cannot but think. True ! but to live as one ought, requires constant, if not intense,

thinking. The shortness and uncertainty of life is so evident, that all take it for granted it wants no proof; and what follows? why this: because we cannot deny it, therefore we forget it; because it wants no proof, therefore we give it no attention; that is, we think not of it at all, for a very odd reason, viz., because we should think of nothing else. This is too strictly expressed, but very near the truth. Ask Cibber if he's of my opinion." <sup>1</sup>

Early in December came another urgent invitation to Bulstrode, the Duchess of Portland's letter being supplemented by an appeal from his old friend Mrs. Delany. His reply must have increased her Grace's regret that he could not join her party.

"I once saw a poor deserter shot in Hyde Park: six musketeers were employed in this melancholy office; the three first, stooping, shot at his breast, and then the other three shot over them at his head, and killed him after he was dead. Such, Madam, is your request supported by Mrs. Delany's; either of them would have struck dead the stoutest resolution I could possibly have taken to disobey your commands. But, Madam, my resolution was quite the contrary, and though in fact a deserter, yet am I an innocent one; or rather I am not a deserter, but taken prisoner by the enemy, and detained in chains, which I am willing to break, but the links of it are too strong, and too many. For first, Madam, next week's fast insists on my stay, secondly, your friend Mr. West, who is patron to my curate, calls him to town, and lastly my little house is full of London guests, with whom I am on the foot of some form, and therefore can neither dislodge nor abandon them. This frosty weather thaws human hearts, and as they sit round a good fire their kind affections flow in such abundance, that I find my friends disposed to oblige for some time.

"I would therefore, Madam, have you and Mrs. Delany

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 17-20.

reflect, that, if you had a person with you, whose company you desired, yet if his inclination were elsewhere, you would consider him as absent still; so, on the other hand, as I assure you you have my inclinations, consider me as present, and treat me as kindly as you possibly can. When a man is personally present, form may supply the place of goodwill, and make handsome treatment consistent with real disregard; but kindly to treat the distant in place, this is pure virtue; this is the treat which angels give us, and therefore not absurdly to be hoped from those who bring them most into our thoughts.

“ However, Madam, give me leave to own, that I have my objections to you: some few marks of mere mortality are still upon you. Your Grace is guilty of a fault, and of a fault which few would be guilty of; you oppress with your condescension and civilities; I am really out of countenance at your repeated kind invitations; and particularly, when your Grace thinks proper to distrust your own powers, and call in allies to assist your unreasonable indulgence towards me. My Lord Duke, the Dean, and Mrs. Delany! With such allies as these a less powerful potentate than your Grace might certainly make a most successful campaign. Suppose the Empress-Queen had a mind to prevail with the Prince of Monaco to accept of a million, and distrusting her own power should engage the King of France, and the Pope, and the Czarina, to succour her endeavour, and ensure her success; would not this be very extraordinary? Make a very small alteration, put parson for Prince, and your Grace may make the application.”<sup>1</sup>

When Young had finally, after so many years, got rid of the law suits connected with his Wharton annuities, he was, as has been seen, once more enmeshed in legal difficulties owing to the disputed will of his stepson, Mr. Lee. It was another stage in that troublesome business which demanded his presence in London on the 17th of December, the date of his next letter to the duchess.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 299-300.



“ I am now in town, and passing by Whitehall I made my bow to your Grace’s house, and was sorry to find it empty. To how many houses in this great town might I bow, in which I have formerly enjoyed agreeable conversation, but shall enjoy it no more! Whose inhabitants have taken a far longer journey from them than to Bulstrode! Such thoughts, Madam, will occur to people in years, and as age is naturally talkative, it will tease other folks with them. How like a perfect dream seems all that is past! And a dream it really is; all is absolutely vanished, all our plans, our labours, even our most innocent amusements and delights; all is as if it had never been, except virtue and vice. These, though past, are still with us; the first is immortal and cannot die, the second will be immortal too, unless it is put to death by repentance. Now, since as an Arabian proverb says, ‘ The remembrance of past joys is a sigh ’; and since by the same way of speaking the infirmities of age may be called a groan, what fine music must a veteran make in so delightful a concert as is now at Bulstrode! Besides, conversing with the blossoms of human life is apt to betray persons in years into a supposition that they are beings of the same nature, and in the same state of existence; which is an absolute mistake. For what is wisdom in the young is folly in the old, and so on the reverse;’ for which reason I once resolved to renounce your Grace’s acquaintance, till I considered that the mischief of your Grace’s age was balanced by the benefit of your example.

“ Your Grace wonders what all this means, and what gives occasion to such random stuff. Why, Madam, to tell you the very truth, I am now in a coffee-house waiting for a rascally attorney, who, having robbed me already of all my money, would now rob me of my time: and rather than do nothing, which is very tedious, I was determined to write nothing to your Grace.”<sup>1</sup>

There was to be no Bulstrode visit for Young this year, for the 28th of December found him still writing his regrets and

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 300-1.

offering his would-be hostess ingenious consolations for his absence. It has been conjectured that the work of "the mighty S—" was Thomas Shaw's *Travels or Observations relating to several parts of Barbary and the Levant*, a book which anticipated modern theories about the Pyramids and extorted a high encomium of its author from Gibbon.

"I am sorry I could not have the honour and pleasure of waiting on your Grace after so many very kind invitations; but your Grace is in the midst of very agreeable company, which wants not that inspiration you are so well able to give. So surrounded, what, Madam, can you possibly want? If you call for the delicacies of art or imagination, Miss Parsons and Mrs. Delany have them at their fingers' ends; if to qualify these sweetmeats you call for the substantial bread of reason and argument, you have one with you who with that bread has strengthened man's heart against the insults of infidelity. Would your Grace, like Drake, travel round the world in search of curiosities? Madam, you may spare yourself that pains, the mighty S—, like Atlas, on his broad shoulders will bring the world, like a rareeshow, to your own door; he can present you with all the wonders of Egypt, pour the sevenfold Nile into the basin at Bulstrode, and luckily, at this season, give your Grace a Pyramid, as a model for a Christmas pie.

"But think me not, Madam, so stupid or profligate as to depreciate his learned and excellent work; 'tis as useful as it is entertaining; 'tis an entertaining comment on the Scriptures, and a noble pillar to support our faith. What can so strengthen our belief as to have set before our eyes still extant monuments of ancient miraculous facts? By this means faith is almost lost in knowledge, and ridiculous infidels grow still more ridiculous in our sight. Most of our travellers go abroad to damage their religion, few to mend it; therefore this work is still the more commendable. . . .

"The infection among the cattle does not spread, and the pleuretic fever is more merciful than at first. I bless God I

escaped it, and I rejoice at Miss Parsons' recovery; she has happily got rid of one pain in her side, but she is at a time of life very liable to another. If the shaft should come from a wrong quiver, your Grace will gently extract it, and apply a medicinal balm more precious than that of Gilead. For what tree drops wisdom? But though you are an excellent surgeon in these delicate cases, yet pardon me if I advise you, strange advice to a duchess, to be a tinker, mend one hole by making another. It is the surest method, if I have any knowledge of the female heart."<sup>1</sup>

In the new year Young's hopes of preferment were to be raised to the highest pitch they ever reached, owing to the death, in December, of Nicholas Clagett, Bishop of Exeter. The Duchess of Portland watched all episcopal vacancies with a lynx-like eye, and no sooner was the Exeter see void than she began writing to all who were likely to have a voice in the appointment of Clagett's successor, besides urging Young to renew his application to the Duke of Newcastle. He obeyed her commands, though he regarded his own letter as "only a carriage for your Grace's artillery," and forwarded his epistle for the duchess to read.

"On Saturday I sent your Grace a letter by a courier, like other princes, which I hope came to hand. That for the Duke of Newcastle I sent open, hoping your Grace would be so good to seal it, after perusal. How affairs may go, by your Grace's favour, I cannot tell; but at present to me they are very mysterious. On your Grace saying in a letter about six weeks or more ago, that a friend of yours would be considered, if any removals beneath were occasioned by Bishop Clagett's death, through the dominion of self-love, I construed myself to be the man meant; and employed my thoughts in sumptuous plans for the consumption of my future abundance, taking it for granted that your Grace had received some intimation of Ministerial good intention towards me. From

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 301-2

this golden dream I was awaked by the thunder of Mr. Roberts's letter, which indeed did not kill me, but filled me with great astonishment, as being utterly at a loss how to reconcile his storm and your Grace's sunshine together. This astonishment was scarce over, when your Grace filled me with new, by taking a dead cause in hand, for dead in all appearance it seemed to me. Now the question is, whether your Grace will please to explain, or to keep me in the dark, as they do nightingales, that they may sing the better. The first will be the kinder office, though the latter will be the better jest; but I acquiesce in this, that your Grace will certainly do what is most proper to be done.

“Madam, I write this letter, lest my courier should have got drunk, and given my letter to the Duke, to whom my humble duty, to some duchess of his own. She will be surprised to find herself in your Grace's company, with two or three Ministers of State about her; and who knows but that I might find my account in her acquaintance? 'Tis certain Nell Gwin made Dr. Ken a bishop.”<sup>1</sup>

Young's letter to the Duke of Newcastle is still to be read among the papers of that strange dispenser of patronage, which, as Lord Rosebery has remarked, “rather resemble the letter-bag of an agency for necessitous persons of social position” than the correspondence of a statesman.

“May it please your Grace,—Permit me humbly to state my case. I have been chaplain to his Majesty (Prince and King) for more than five and twenty years. Some years ago, by the Duchess of Portland, I obtained your Grace's promise of favour after two or three were preferred. After more were preferred, I presumed to wait on your Grace, and you was pleased to renew my hopes. Since that vacancies have been made; but how far I may still flatter myself with hopes of your Grace's favour, I cannot tell.

“But this I know, that I have sought all the means in

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 302-3.

my power to show that great respect I owe to your Grace. Not that I pretend to the least title to your Grace's patronage, but most humbly hope your regard so far only as the nature and the reason of things, to the generous and equitable mind, each of a stranger, would speak in the favour of one who has served so long, without any reward, but the honour of it.

"Pardon me, my Lord Duke, the liberty I take in writing this, and permit me, in most humble hope of learning your Grace's good pleasure, to subscribe myself, etc." <sup>1</sup>

Coincident with this appeal, the poet wrote to the duchess to express his gratitude for her exertions on his behalf.

"I return my most cordial thanks for the pains you have been pleased to take in my favour; if that will not do, nothing will, and I resign my chimerical expectations, which it is a shame I should have retained so long. I consider it as a sort of a curse on the clergy, that the nature of their provision in this life keeps them generally gaping after preferment so long that they forget the next. . . .

"As I must soon resign in much more material points, I bless God I am resigned in this. I humbly thank your Grace for your kind wishes and endeavours, and shall call off my thoughts from so dead a scent to other game. I shall send them to take a turn, not among the stalls, but among the tombs of Westminster Abbey. There ambition will go out as a taper in a damp vault. I will no longer set my thoughts on a pinnacle of the Temple, to take a view of the glories of the world, lest I fall down and worship him to whom they belong; nor do I, Madam, take this resolution altogether out of regard to that motive which ought to determine me to it; but out also of mere human, secular prudence, for I find that expectation, in a point of this nature, hurts me much more than despair." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 32710, f. 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 304-5.

That was a wise resolve. For it was not Young's fate to be included among those recreant bishops of whom the Duke of Newcastle, after his dismissal from office, wittily said that "even fathers in God sometimes forget their maker." He did make one final statement of his case, to which he was prompted by a correspondence between the duchess and Andrew Stone, Under-Secretary of State, but having done that he determined to "stir no further" in "taking pains to be despised." His letter to Newcastle of the 3rd of March, 1747, is perhaps the best apology for his persistence and the severest condemnation of his neglect.

"May it please your Grace,—The Duchess of Portland lately sent to Mr. Stone, and expressing her solicitude for my success, transmitted, through his hands, my letter to your Grace. But she, not having heard anything from Mr. Stone since, her Grace fears the worst, and I am persuaded the multiplicity of higher affairs has prevented your Grace from considering the full state of my case; how singular it is, and how very distinct from all others that apply for your Grace's favour.

"I am, my Lord Duke, the only person living that has served above twenty years for nothing; the only person who served his Majesty when Prince, that was not preferred; and, I believe, the only person that is in a worse situation with your Grace than he was four years ago. Then, your Grace was pleased to promise to provide for me after two or three; but now I have nothing of an express and certain nature to rely on.

"This, may it please your Grace, seems somewhat hard; but this is not the worst. I am confident your Grace does not consider, that not only my fortune and family, but my character, too, feels the stroke of my being thus overlooked. It is not only my loss, but my reproach and infamy. For what must the world think of me, who by so professed and eminent a patron of worth and learning, am thrown aside? And that, too, when all possible efforts of various kinds have been made

to procure his favour ; and when both the Archbishops and Mr. Pelham are ready to second the Duchess of Portland's intercession with your Grace ? And when your Grace yourself (I flatter myself) would be prevailed on to recommend me, if the disposal of preferments was in other hands ?

“ There's not only something uncommon, but something strange, therefore, in my case ; especially if it be considered that conferring favour on me will, in effect, be preferring two ; since my term must be short in it ; for I have many years been asking blessing of my juniors on the bench, and cannot reasonably hope much of life to come.

“ For these reasons I am not, my Lord Duke, more sorry than ashamed of a repulse. That your Grace would not brand me, is, in effect, the favour I presume to ask. And therefore I most humbly hope your Grace will re-consider my case. For why should I of all men be made a contradiction to your Grace's general conduct ? Why should I be made the single drawback from your most illustrious character of encouraging letters, and of succouring such as eminently suffer in their equitable pretensions, and can plead so just a title to his Majesty's favour ? ”<sup>1</sup>

From this date Young, save for a brief flutter of renewed anticipation now and then, settled down quietly to his Welwyn rectorship, his visits to Bulstrode, and occasional excursions to London. Some seven years were to elapse ere he renewed his appeal to the outside world in the character of an author, but, with a curate to relieve him of his routine parish work, he found ample occupation for his leisure hours among his books, in his garden, or in entertaining his friends. It was owing to his efforts, too, that the medicinal springs of his parish were once more exploited in opposition to the waters of Tunbridge Wells, and that, as an additional attraction, an assembly was organised at Welwyn. His correspondence with the Duchess of Portland and Richardson reveals him as happy in his lot, keenly interested in the domestic history of

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 32710, f. 277.

his own parish, and not without a watchful eye on what was transpiring in the greater world of London. During the first part of 1747, too, he was much occupied in correcting his *Night Thoughts* for a collected edition which Richardson had arranged to publish. A good example of his instinct for deriving epistolary "copy" from his own affairs is furnished by his letter of the 16th of April to the Duchess of Portland.

"Amid so many dear domestic engagements of heart, and so many loud calls from the gay and great around you, is it possible your Grace can think of one so much out of the way, of such an invisible being as your humble servant? I believe not; I must therefore let your Grace know that you commanded me to write, and that this comes therefore from the pen of obedience, not of presumption, but as I have no business and but little invention, what shall I say? I will tell you a melancholy, but true tale, of too late a date.

"A young woman, now about twenty-one, of good birth, and better principles, was some years in my family. About two years ago her much elder sister, who had long been governess of my family and me, married, settled in town, and carried her younger sister with her. A young apothecary in good business and circumstances courted her, won her affections, mutual vows of marriage were passed. Things standing thus, she came down for a month or two to me the latter end of last autumn; the thing was kept warm by letters every post; I invited, nay pressed him to come down to her, knowing the pain of absent lovers; but business, he said, hindered him. She returned to town in high expectations, just before I was last there; the spark visited her, but his behaviour was cold; she burst into tears; on which he said, 'My dearest, I understand those tears; they upbraid me; and so far they agree with my own sentiments; I upbraid myself. You feel, I see, the force of love, and therefore will the more easily pardon the same weakness in another. I feel it to distraction, but ask ten thousand pardons, 'tis for another person. I courted her some years ago, but she





*Photo by*

**WHITE HART, WELWYN**

*A. G. Bishop, Codicote*



absolutely refused me, which occasioned the fatal step I have taken with you. But since you have been in the country, I have received intimations that she has thought better of it. The temptation is irresistible, and therefore we must part.' And so he took his leave; a duke could have done no more.

"The heathen deities were said to laugh at the perjuries of lovers; and if your Grace is as much of a heathen as you are a goddess, you perhaps may laugh with them, but I cannot. If she lives a thousand years she'll never feel greater pain, and a good heart in pain is the most melancholy sight in the world. The sole consolation is, that a good heart in pain by pain will be made still better. But what young lady of your Grace's acquaintance would better her heart on terms like these!"<sup>1</sup>

Midway in the following month he was pleasantly anticipating a visit from the author of *Pamela*, who was still labouring at his *Clarissa*.

"I thank you for the hopes of seeing you here; and if you consider how few are the joys of age, you will not think I flatter you when I say, I greatly rejoice at it. Nor am I sorry for the multiplicity of business of which you complain; it is profit, credit, and health.

"The delightful weather we have had, brings forward our season for the steel-water, and consequently of my enjoying you at this place, for your health, and my greater pleasure. I do assure you, from the authority of the best physicians, and from experience, which is a better physician than the college can afford, that this spring has all the virtue of Tunbridge in it.

"I have corrected the *Eighth Night*; you will let me know when you have occasion for it. I forgot to tell you, that this place will be as salutary to *Clarissa* as to yourself; for amid your multiplicity of affairs, how you can sufficiently attend to her charms is to me astonishing. Though we are told that

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 305-6.

Venus rose from the sea, yet I do not remember that it was from the sea in a storm ; which seems to me no unapt resemblance of your London life. My best love and service to you and yours." <sup>1</sup>

As he was expecting Richardson so soon, he felt unable to accept the invitation to Bulstrode to which he refers in the last paragraph of his letter of June the 1st to the duchess. The allusion to Lord Titchfield, the eldest son of her Grace, was prophetic so far as that youth's future career was concerned, but by the date he became Prime Minister Young had been nearly twenty years in his grave. The Duchess of Queensberry was, of course, that eccentric patron of Gay of whom Horace Walpole was soon to ask, " Don't a course of folly for forty years make one very sick ? "

" I am glad your Grace has had so pleasant a ramble, and that you stopped short of Ireland, which is so fond of an English Duchess, and cares not to let them fly home again, when once in her net. Cornbury, your Grace says, is a charming place, and fit for such a master. My Lord I know not but from Mr. Pope and your Grace ; now Pope was a poet, and might therefore fib ; my Lord Cornbury must therefore thank your Grace for the good opinion I have of him.

" The Duchess of Queensberry is, your Grace says, very entertaining, and so are all oddities ; peevishness and pride are in their own nature the most ridiculous things in the world, and therefore must be extremely entertaining to such as only see, not suffer from them. If Mr. Foote would take her Grace off well, you would find her much more entertaining still. . . .

" Your Grace has sent Lord Titchfield to Westminster ; no doubt it gave your Grace some care and concern, and so will everything in life that is valuable and worth our wishes. It is greatly for my Lord's advantage, and therefore will be greatly for your Grace's happiness. Whatever advantages a private education may have, two very great ones it certainly wants, emulation and early experience in the tempers and

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 21-2.

talents of others; the first is the greatest spur to diligence, and the last is an absolutely necessary qualification for making any figure in public life. And why, Madam, should we despair of seeing his grandfather revive in him? When Lord Titchfield is Prime Minister, I will apply again for preferment, and not before. And I think myself happy that your Grace's wishes concur with my resolution of neither visiting nor writing any more.

"If your Grace continues your resolution of leaving town in three weeks from the date of this letter, I shall not have the honour of waiting on your Grace the latter end of this month, when I am obliged to be on duty at Kensington. If, I mean, the gout will give me leave.

"Your Grace is jealous either of my bad head or bad heart without cause, for I do assure your Grace that I have not the least suspicion of insincerity in your Grace's favour to me, but with true gratitude of heart remember and acknowledge the manifold instances of your partiality to one who has no title to it, but his true sense of your Grace's prudence, virtues and accomplishments, so rarely seen in so eminent a situation, and so conspicuous a point of light.

"Your Grace is so kind as to invite me to Bulstrode; I have the assurance to invite you, Madam, and my Lord Duke, and Mrs. Delany, etc., to Welwyn. I am but four hours from you, and it may be some amusement to you to laugh at a country parson. Madam, I shall be proud of that disrespect."<sup>1</sup>

Richardson was slow in keeping his promise to visit Welwyn, so slow that on the 5th of August Young sent him an urgent reminder.

"If I do not see you now, I shall despair of ever seeing you at Welwyn. The season of the year, the fineness of the weather, the vacation from business, the smallness of the distance, the benefit to your health, the gratification to your

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 306-7.

friend, the regard to your promise, and, perhaps, the company of Mr. Cibber (to whom my humble service) may possibly incline you to confer this much desired favour.

“ My love and service to Mrs. Richardson and the little ones.

“ It will be no interruption to your amour with Clarissa. She may travel with you, and be assured of a hearty welcome.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether the Duke and Duchess of Portland availed themselves of the opportunity to “ laugh at a country parson ” does not transpire, but it is to be hoped her Grace did not decline the invitation to the little Lord Edward which the poet extended in his letter of the 10th of September.

“ His Grace the little Archbishop will not catch a fever in his return ; the weather is now very moderate, and I beg him to be my guest in his return. Your Grace is so good as to think of taking me up in your journey, but before Miss Lee returns it is not in my power to be from home, and her I expect not till the beginning of next month, at which my Lord Lichfield comes to town to welcome his uncle Fitzroy to England, and then will bring Miss Lee along with him. As my present fate necessarily fixes me here, your Grace will be sure to find me on my post whenever you return, and I shall for the future consider my post as a post of honour, since it gives me the opportunity of paying my duty to your Grace in your Welbeck expeditions.”<sup>2</sup>

Through what he described as his own “ will-less ” nature, Richardson failed to journey to his friend this year, but instead sent him the first two volumes of *Clarissa*, with a lament that he ever consulted anybody about that story save “ Dr. Young, who so kindly vouchsafed me his ear, and sometimes his opinion.” Three days subsequent to the date of that letter, November the 22nd, the poet wrote to Bulstrode, and did not fail to report his latest item of literary news.

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 307.

“ Since my last I have been in a very bad state ; my days more than ever painful, my nights almost insupportable. What I have felt is, I hope, to your Grace quite inconceivable, for so, I am sure, it must be if you was never afflicted with the rheumatism yourself ; but I bless God I am much, very much better, yet still unable to go abroad without suffering by it. As soon as I can I shall attempt waiting on your Grace, for Miss Lee is now with me, and sends her humble duty. . . .

“ I humbly thank your Grace for the offer of your chaise ; I may possibly ask the favour of having it meet me at Rickmansworth ; but as yet I am all uncertainty and complaint.

“ A second work by the author of *Pamela* will be published in a fortnight, and I fancy your Grace will find amusement in it, if, I mean, your taste is for a melancholy tale. I have heard it formerly, and not without a tear ; but, as I remember, your Grace laughs at fiction ; if so, I must visit others to see them weep. Fictitious tears are detestable, tears from fiction are not so. May your Grace never have occasion for any other.”<sup>1</sup>

In forwarding the early volumes of *Clarissa*, Richardson paid his friend's stepdaughter the compliment of describing her as one of whose “ delicacy ” he had the highest opinion, though, such was to be the subsequent degeneracy of Lovelace's character, he was doubtful whether the sequel would be agreeable reading to a young unmarried lady. By the time that sequel was published, however, Caroline Lee had changed her state, for in the summer of 1748 she became the wife of Major Haviland. Ere turning to those passages in Young's correspondence which refer to that event there is a letter to the duchess of the 20th of February which calls for quotation because it reveals the poet with a feeling for nature that is scantily illustrated in his verse.

“ As I opened my chamber window this morning pretty

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 308.

early, I was struck with the most beautiful landscape I ever saw. Houses, trees, woods, fields, all was covered with one entire sheet of snow, not a single footstep to be seen, not the least violation of its immaculate virginity. What an amiable emblem of universal innocence was this! But since, as I conceive, our innocence is not yet quite universal, I was obliged to think of it in another view, and imagine our whole polluted species doing penance in a white sheet, as the custom still prevails in Scotland, for their secret sins.

“ Now please, Madam, to observe that I send all this to your Grace purely as an article of news; you in town are in another world, and know nothing of what passes in the natural scene of things. In your hot-bed climate the frost is warm, and in your sea-coal situation snow is black; in all things you are unlike us innocents in the country; with you honesty is not the best policy, nor is the worthy the most honourable man at Court.

“ But your Grace long ere this censures me for my triviality; the weather, you say, is a common topic of discourse, that indeed you have often met with it in conversation, but that you never saw it signed and sealed in the solemnity of an epistle before. Madam, I acknowledge the indictment, I plead guilty, I own my letter is a kind of frost-piece, and far fitter to make a page among the winter months of an almanac than in any other composition, but I assure your Grace that the frost has only nipped my fingers; it has got no farther; my heart lies ten degrees at least southward of my hand.”<sup>1</sup>

As previous references have shown, Miss Lee's engagement to Major Haviland did not meet with the unreserved approval of her stepfather or her uncle, the Earl of Lichfield. “ The man,” Young wrote, “ seems to be a plain and honest man, and I can see not much she could fall in love with unless it is his integrity, which, methinks, should have more charms for an old philosopher than for a young lady.” He ignored the probability that it was Miss Lee's upbringing with such an

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 308-9.



“old philosopher” as himself may have accounted for her preference for a sober rather than a showy suitor. Anyway, the choice she had made some four years earlier she firmly adhered to, and the marriage took place in the June of this year. It was not until late in September, however, that Mrs. Haviland said her final farewell to her affectionate step-father and her girlhood home at Welwyn. Nor was it to be long ere she joined her mother and Narcissa in the silent land. Young’s forebodings as to her delicate health were too well founded, and it may have been that the hardships incidental to the life of an officer’s wife in the eighteenth century hastened her end. A few months after her marriage her husband was ordered to Ireland, and there she passed away in 1751.

Soon after the marriage of Miss Lee, the rector of Welwyn committed the oversight of his household to Mary Hallows, the daughter of his late friend, the Rev. Daniel Hallows, who, after the custom of the age, is always referred to in his correspondence as Mrs. Hallows. Now according to the curate point of view, that worthy lady acquired an undue influence over the poet and was the cause of Young’s estrangement from his son; but, on the other hand, the correspondence of his friends and the testimony of those who were his guests agree in depicting her as an ideal housekeeper for the aged clergyman.

Perhaps the curate’s point of view was not altogether disinterested. And certainly the character of one of those clerics was not of a kind to inspire confidence in his testimony. It has been seen above that Young appointed his first curate in the October of 1746, and this seems to have been the John Kidgell who afterwards found a more suitable sphere for his ministry as chaplain to the notorious “Q.,” and who had eventually to fly from his country to escape imprisonment. Kidgell, even more than Young’s last curate, the Rev. John Jones, was responsible for defaming the character of Mrs. Hallows, for in 1755 he published a novel entitled *The Card*, in which she and the poet were held up to ridicule, the former under the name of Mrs. Fusby and the latter as Dr. Elwes. According to this trumpery story, Mrs. Fusby, who is described

as the "female Superintendant of Affairs," was a sly drinker, censorious of her neighbours, austere to her servants, and had, by "artful management" obtained the "degree of a Favourite." It is some relief to learn that although she was in her deportment "affectedly scrupulous and formal," she was "*incontestably a Virgin.*" As an example of the craft by which she maintained her dominion over Dr. Elwes she is represented as having been exceedingly annoyed one day that the doctor seemed to be talking secrets to a friend in the garden, and as having lured the two into the house by sending out word that the canaries had escaped from their cages and were likely to be killed by the cat. On the couple coming indoors, she gave them a bowl of chocolate, and ensconced herself in an adjoining room to overhear their conversation. And so on.

What should be remembered is that neither of Young's curates lodged in his house, and that consequently they derived most of their knowledge of the rector's domestic affairs from the gossip of Welwyn. This can be easily read between the lines of the tales with which his last curate, Mr. Jones, filled his letters, but as those letters belong to a later period they need not detain us here.

Leaving out of account Young's own epistles, it is significant to observe that in Richardson's letters Mrs. Hallows is always referred to or addressed with respect and affection, while Mrs. Montagu has happily left us a tribute to that lady which is doubtless nearer the truth than Kidgell's fictions or Mr. Jones's second-hand gossip. The letter containing that tribute, written to the Duchess of Portland in the November of 1774, was occasioned by the probability that another aged poet would soon need a matron to superintend his household.

"Our friend Dr. Young in his old age contrived the best; he had always some matron clothed in grey, who sat at the head of his table in decent sort, helped the guests, took care that the Doctor should not forget he was at dinner; and when the tablecloth was taken away, the sober gentlewoman

shrunk back into her muslin hood, and with composed serenity of countenance listened to the conversation of the company. With the same affability and discretion she poured out the coffee and made the tea, and such was her temper and deportment she was fit to have been High Priestess in the temple of the Great Apollo, if he had wanted a domestic establishment. Never did I see her disturbed in any of her great offices of carving, helping to sauce, or sweetening the coffee, by any of the sublime or witty things Dr. Young uttered. Often have I dropped a bit of chicken off my fork, by a sudden start at something new and ingenious said by our friend, while she, with a steady hand and sober mind, divided the leg of the goose from the side, and other things that equally required an undivided attention.”<sup>1</sup>

That picture of the unobtrusive Mrs. Hallows has an additional value from the glimpse it gives us of Young as a host. It has already been seen he was not the lonely hermit of some traditions, but there is much other evidence to show that his rural home was frequently invaded by numerous visitors. One month he is prevented from keeping an appointment with the Duchess of Portland by the arrival of “a coachful of ladies, who came to dine with me”; another he is thanking her Grace and her husband for the “honour” of their visit and informing them that if they had stayed a little longer they would have met Mrs. Montagu and Lady Sandwich. “Old Cibber” journeyed out to Welwyn whenever his theatrical affairs afforded him leisure; and once there was so large a party, including Speaker Onslow and Richardson, that the novelist had to be provided with a bed elsewhere. Bennet Langton, the friend of Dr. Johnson, testified to Young’s “benevolence” as a host, and Croft reported the foreign visitor Tschärner as remarking on the order of his household, and saying that the poet was “very pleasant in conversation, and extremely polite.”

So many references to Young’s various ailments have been

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 340.

recorded in his letters that the reader will be able to appreciate the accuracy of that biographer who described the poet as "having scarcely known a day's sickness during a long life"! To the afflictions which had sent him to Tunbridge Wells, or impelled him to drink the Welwyn waters, or made him resort to his favourite Norway tar, there was added in these years the premonition of failing sight. In the December of 1748 he complained that his eye was "just as it was" and that he could not use it without "uneasiness"; a year later it still so "incommoded" him that he was obliged to "write shorter" than he ought.

But in spite of all he maintained his wonted cheerfulness. When occasion demanded, as when the Duchess of Portland asked his advice how to "get clear of ineffectual wishes," his letters are tinged with becoming sobriety; but his chief trouble in these days seems to have been nothing more serious than her Grace's inability to agree with him in his admiration of Richardson and his *Clarissa*. "I know," he wrote, "your Grace has no great esteem of this author; therefore in a letter to you I shall suppress my admiration of him, and will only, instead of panegyrist, turn prophet, and let your Grace know that your great grandchildren will read, and not without tears, the sheets which are now in the press. They will pay their grandmamma's debt to this poor injured man; and injured in a point which would touch him most nearly, if he knew your Grace, and knew your opinion of him." In another letter he made an appeal to the duchess, added a chapter to the literary history of *Clarissa*, and proclaimed the novel a touchstone of virtue. "I wish your Grace would stand god-mother, and give it its name, *Clarissa the Divine*. That romance will probably do more good than a body of divinity. If all printers could turn authors, I would turn printer in order to be instrumental in promoting such benefit to mankind. And yet, Madam, this excellent offspring of the imagination was in danger of having been stifled in its birth; or, at least, of having been made a changeling. I think your Grace knows Mr. Littleton; he, Mr. Fielding, Cibber, etc., all of them

pressed the author very importunately to make his story end happily ; but does not your Grace think that it is infinitely better as it is ? It does end happily, most happily, for Clarissa in the sense of all who do not terminate their notions of happiness at the grave. The reader that has most faith and virtue will be most pleased with this composition. I look on it therefore as a sort of touchstone for the readers of this virtuous age, who, while they think they are only passing their judgment on another's ingenuity, will make a discovery of their own hearts."

In earlier days, as has been seen, Young often visited Bulstrode late in the year, but now that old age was creeping on he was afraid to venture on a winter journey. Thus an autumnal excursion to his old school at Winchester prevented his acceptance of one invitation, as he explained in his letter of October 21st, 1750.

" The many and great favours I have received at your hands make it my duty to comply with your requests ; your high rank makes it my ambition, and your Grace's amiable accomplishment makes it my pleasure, and the honour you did Welwyn last year makes it an absolute debt in me to wait on you. Now it seems somewhat odd that a man cannot comply with his duty and his own earnest desires.

" But indeed, Madam, the case really stands thus. Soon after I had the honour of your Grace's last letter I was obliged to go to Winchester, where I had a son at the then election standing for a fellowship of a college in Oxford ; applications to the electors, etc., detained me there till the latter end of September ; then business carried me into Surrey, where I continued some time, determining on my return to Welwyn to set out for Bulstrode ; but on coming home I found a letter from the Speaker (Onslow) proposing to meet his son from Cambridge at my house : this I knew not how well to decline, and hoping their meeting would be soon, I still proposed waiting on your Grace afterwards. But the Speaker put it off from time to time, and now at last he has let me know that he will be with me to-morrow, and probably he may

stay till the end of the week. This pushes me too far into the winter to venture a journey, for the least cold flings me into pains of which my Lord Duke may have some idea, but your Grace can have none at all.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who are familiar with Mrs. Delany's *Autobiography and Correspondence* will recall that lady's numerous references to the Duchess of Portland's interest in the gardens of Bulstrode, and it is obvious from Young's letter of November the 4th that her horticultural improvements were the theme of many of her epistles to the poet. She was sure of appreciation from him, for he too was a passionate lover of flowers. And it was characteristic of the man that he should regard them as the symbols of higher things.

“Notwithstanding my truant behaviour this summer, I am not altogether absent from Bulstrode; I am as much there as a person at this distance can possibly be. I run over most of your alterations in my fancy, and am exceedingly pleased with them; nor am I at all surprised at it, considering whose taste and genius presides over that scene so very capable of shining; and I am persuaded that your Grace can change most things for the better but yourself. This, Madam, I think is courtly, and on the credit of it, I beg leave to step into your flower-garden, of which you are so fond. Why, truly, it is a most gorgeous apartment of your paradise. What shapes! what colours! what combinations of them! what varieties! what inimitable patterns for human art to copy after! Even a duchess's fingers are far distanced by them. Poor Solomon! what a beggarly appearance dost thou make in all thy glory compared with these! But I am apt to believe, Madam, that if Solomon was with us, and sufficiently disengaged from the infatuations of his seraglio, he would be likely to say something to this purpose: ‘If these things so delight us, if the glories of the vegetable world so much claim our admiration, how much more so, the glories, the flowers of the moral

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 318.

world; where there are so many deformed and poisonous weeds to set off, as so many foils, their amiability!’

“ These are flowers indeed worth rearing, flowers that engage the care, and cultivation, and superintendence, and affection of superior beings, fill the invisible paths amongst us with fragrancy, and ever shine in their sight. Pardon the boldness if I say that the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, etc., are florists with regard to these; they gaze on them, and protect them for a season, and then to make their fate as happy as their beauties are bright, they will gather them one day in glorious clusters and present them to the Supreme. To whose great protection I, who am but grass, most cordially recommend your Grace and the little flowers of your family.”<sup>1</sup>

Save for the occupation provided by the correcting of the *Night Thoughts* for Richardson’s collected edition, these years were practically barren of literary labours. But that Young kept himself informed on the notable books of the day is obvious from his letters to the author of *Clarissa*, one of which, written in the November of 1749, shows him to have been an early reader of Sarah Fielding’s *The Governess*.

“ I have read Miss Fielding with great pleasure. Your *Clarissa* is, I find, the Virgin-mother of several pieces; which, like beautiful suckers, rise from her immortal root. I rejoice at it; for the noblest compositions need such aids, as the multitude is swayed more by others’ judgments than their own. How long was *Paradise Lost* an obscure book? Authors give works their merit; but others give them their fame; and it is their merit becoming famous which gives them that salutary influence which every worthy writer proposes, on mankind. Suppose, in the title-page of the *Night Thoughts*, you should say—*published by the author of Clarissa*. This is a trick to put it into more hands; I know it would have that effect. I have disposed of Miss Fielding into five very proper hands.”<sup>2</sup>

*Bath MSS.* i, 318-19.

*Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 27.

At length the spirit of composition stirred in the aged poet once more, for in the September of 1751 he has to decline an invitation to Bulstrode on the plea of renewed authorship.

“ In order to give the reason for not waiting on your Grace according to your and my Lord Duke’s very kind desire, I find myself obliged to let you into a secret, which I desire you not to communicate. I am, Madam, printing a piece of prose, and am obliged to correct the press myself, which forces me to be in town till that affair is over ; and if I can so hasten it as to have it done in time, the piece and its author shall wait on you together ; if not, I shall send your Grace the piece as soon as finished. I shall send to no one else, not putting my name to it, and for some reasons desiring the writer may be concealed ; which reasons your Grace may possibly guess at, if you do the thing the honour of a perusal. As for the performance, let that be as it will, I am sure the subject is such as will meet with your approbation.”<sup>1</sup>

For a reason to which Young never referred, the publication of this “ piece of prose ” was delayed nearly three years, for it was not until 1754 that *The Centaur not Fabulous* was given to the world. Perhaps, however, the explanation may be found in the poet’s letter of the 6th of August, 1752.

“ Madam, I should never more have mentioned to you anything about preferment ; but, since your Grace glances at it in your last, pardon me, if out of pure curiosity I ask what your crony, the Archbishop of Canterbury, meant by a letter to me two or three years ago, in which he says, that ‘ he would say nothing to me, but that he had acquainted my friend the Duchess of Portland with what concerned my interest.’ I suppose his Grace meant to say something that was agreeable, unconcerned for anything more, for I have neither heard from nor writ to him since. Your Grace, if

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 320.



you please, may at your leisure unriddle this ; if not, I am quite contented to continue still in the dark.”<sup>1</sup>

Although *The Centaur not Fabulous* was to be published anonymously, Young knew that the secret of its authorship could not be wholly hidden, and as that little tract dealt so frankly with the immoralities of persons in high places, he may have decided to withhold it in case it should imperil his scanty chances of preferment. As by this date, too, the death of the Prince of Wales had broken up the opposition court, his connection with which had been so fatal to his interests, the poet had an additional reason for hoping that his title to higher honours in the Church would at last be recognised.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 320.

## CHAPTER VIII

MORALIST AND CRITIC

1754-1759

YOUNG must have derived considerable pleasure from the fact that early in 1754 the Duchess of Portland was at last converted to his opinion of Richardson. "I am glad, Madam," he wrote, "that my friend Mr. Richardson has had the happiness to recover your Grace's good opinion. I am confident he deserves it." It was not "*Clarissa the Divine*," however, which effected that change, but rather her successor, *Sir Charles Grandison*. The duchess was never able to tolerate either *Pamela* or *Clarissa*, a remarkable proof of her individuality when it is remembered that most of her lady friends and contemporaries were enraptured with those novels; perhaps her Grace objected to them for Horace Walpole's reason that their "pictures of high life as conceived by a bookseller" were travesties of her own social order. Lord Chesterfield was of the opinion that Richardson erred as greatly in depicting "the modes" in *Grandison*, but that novel established its author in the Duchess of Portland's favour and even won him her friendship.

That Young was enthusiastic in his praise of *Grandison* is no surprise. And in writing to Richardson on the 14th of March he expressed his delight in unmeasured terms.

"Joy to you, dear Sir, and joy to the world; you have done great things for it. And I will venture to affirm, that no one shall read you without either benefit, or guilt. Pray ask Mr. Cibber from me where are now the fine gentlemen of the stage! Sir Charles has entered a caveat against their wonted applause, and Mr. Cibber signs it, or incurs the mentioned guilt.

"You have, my dear friend, made a long and successful campaign. God grant you may live long to reap the fruits of it; and continuing by your conduct to vindicate your sex,

convince the hypercritics that Sir Charles is by no means drawn beyond the life!

“ Shall I tell you what I think? You would not let me if you knew what I was about to say. When the pulpit fails, other expedients are necessary. I look on you as a peculiar instrument of Providence, adjusted to the peculiar exigence of the times; in which all would be fine gentlemen, and only are at a loss to know what that means. While they read, perhaps, from pure vanity, they do not read in vain; and are betrayed into benefit, while mere amusement is their pursuit. I speak not this at a venture; I am so happy as already to have had proofs of what I say.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the poet wrote with all the more feeling because he was on the eve of trying to meet “ the peculiar exigence of the times ” by that “ piece of prose ” referred to in the previous chapter. The age needed every preacher who had a message and enthusiasm. What was the morality of the fashionable world is revealed in the faithful mirror of Horace Walpole’s letters. Gambling for high stakes and unrestrained sensuality were the amusements, and perfidy and speculation were the business of the leaders of the nation. “ There was a revolt,” wrote J. R. Green, “ against religion and against the churches in both the extremes of English society. In the higher circles of society ‘ everyone laughs,’ said Montesquieu on his visit to England, ‘ if one talks of religion.’ Of the prominent statesmen of the time the greater part were unbelievers in any form of Christianity, and distinguished for the grossness and immorality of their lives. . . . At the other end of the social scale lay the masses of the poor. They were ignorant and brutal to a degree which it is hard to conceive.” The historian, indeed, finds it difficult to decide whether the Restoration or the age of George II was the more abandoned to the sins of the flesh.

Now the rector of Welwyn was not indifferent to the signs of the times. If he did not, on the one hand, share the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 32-3.

ecstasy of John Wesley, or, on the other, the gloomy forebodings of William Whiston, he was a comrade of both in fighting the common enemy of deism. In Young's opinion—an opinion he had already argued in the *Night Thoughts*—infidelity was the root cause of every evil. And he was specially concerned to counteract that "blunderbuss against religion and morality," that is, the works of Bolingbroke, of which Dr. Johnson said the author was a coward "because he had no resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death." The "blunderbuss" was discharged, and Young's counterblast, *The Centaur not Fabulous*, delivered, within a few months of each other.

Singular as, on a first reading, the title of that "piece in prose" may seem to the modern reader, a perusal of the author's explanatory dedication reveals its felicity. That dedication was addressed "To the Lady ——," and as she is described as one who could so readily put his letters "into the hands of those who want them most" perhaps there need be little hesitation in filling in the blank with the name of the Countess of Yarmouth, the King's mistress. For her benefit Young explained his title.

"You will probably ask why *The Centaur* is prefixed as a title to them. The men of pleasure, the licentious and profligate, are the subject of these Letters; and in such, as in the fabled Centaur, the brute runs away with the man: therefore I call them *Centaur*s. And, farther, I call them *Centaur*s not *Fabulous*, because by their scarce half-human conduct and character, that enigmatical and purely ideal figure of the ancients is not unriddled only, but realised."

To further elucidate his parable, Young presented her ladyship with a vivid word picture of the kind of creature he had in view.

"The statues of the renowned are set up in public, to kindle honest emulation. In most ancient schools of wisdom

were the busts or portraits of the wise. What, Madam, if for your modern Academy, Hogarth should draw a Centaur, not, as usual, with his bow and arrow, but (what will hit my mark as well) with Harlequin's sabre by his side ; in a party-coloured jacket of pictured cards ; a band of music before, a scaramouch-demon behind him ; a weathercock on his head, a rattle in his hand, the Decalogue under his feet, and, for the benefit of your scholars, a label out of his mouth, inscribed, as was the temple of Apollo, with *Γνώθι σεαυτόν*, in letters of gold ? (In me 'know thyself'). They, your scholars, will take it in the true philosophic sense, and wonder how it came into the mouth of so ridiculous and, to them, so foreign a monster."

While his book was still in the press it occurred to Young that its attractions would be enhanced by a frontispiece translating his description of the Centaur into the terms of the graphic art. Hence his letter to Richardson of the 12th of August, 1754.

" If you know any proper artist in that way, I wish you would show him the grotesque picture of a Centaur in my dedication. If I could have a cut of it, I would prefix it to the Letters. It would, I think, have two good effects :

" 1st. It would carry the reader with more appetite through the dedication, as letting him into the meaning of the odd picture before him.

" 2nd. It would look as if there was more occasion for the dedication, which is pretty long, than there seems to be at present.

" This seems to me a trick to cheat the public. The question is if you will be an accomplice in it.

" A man of taste in sculpture may improve on my sketch ; and reconcile anything in it, that is wrong, to the sculptor's art, or reject it. I wish I knew Hogarth, or your friend Mr. Highmore."

Of the six letters on "the life in vogue" which make up *The Centaur not Fabulous* the first is devoted to *Infidelity* because, in Young's opinion, pleasure and infidelity "must prevail or decrease together."

"Pleasure and infidelity reciprocally generate each other; and that necessarily. For faith is entirely the result of reason; and reason is impotent in proportion to the prevalence of sense: therefore sensual pleasure begets infidelity. On the reverse, he that disbelieves a futurity must be fond of the present, and eagerly swallow its unrivalled delights; and therefore infidelity lets loose the rein to pleasure, and gives it an ample range. He then, who would reduce one, must strike at both. Eve and the serpent fell together: Pleasure, like the first, plucks the forbidden fruit; and infidelity says with the latter, *Thou shalt not surely die.*"

Pursuing his argument, Young observed that faith was necessary on its own account without relation to anything else; that modern deism was criminal in itself; that a corrupt faith produced an irregular life; that the mysteries of religion were accepted by those who thought it "no dishonour to their understandings to credit their creator"; that the more seemingly incredible the matter in which men believed the more respect they showed to the relator; and that it was with our understandings as with our eyes.

"Both have their mysteries: both have objects beyond their reach; some accidentally, some absolutely. We see not those objects that are placed in an obscure light, because there is a defect in the medium; we see not those that are vested with too much light, because there is a weakness in the sensory, unable to sustain such strong impressions."

Three letters on *Pleasure* follow, the parent-stem of theft, murder, perjury, and other "fatal fruits." But the moralist was careful to explain that he was not opposed to all enjoyment.

“ I am as great a lover of it as they,” he confessed, “ for without a relish of the good things of life, we cannot be thankful.” Providence, he added, had provided men with “ irreprovable pleasures,” among which he characteristically included that of gardening.

“ What is requisite to make a wise and happy man, but reflection and peace? and both are the natural growth of a garden. Nor is a garden only a promoter of a good man’s happiness, but a picture of it; and, in some sort, shows him to himself. Its culture, order, fruitfulness, and seclusion from the world, compared to the weeds, wildness, and exposure of a common field, is no bad emblem of a good man, compared to the multitude. A garden weeds the mind; it weeds it of worldly thoughts, and sows celestial seeds in their stead. For what see we there, but what awakens in us our gratitude to Heaven? A garden to the virtuous is a Paradise still extant, a Paradise unlost.”

In short, his touchstone for innocent pleasure was that it should revive and not deaden the soul; and that his reader might not fail to distinguish between the two kinds, or fail to recognise his own likeness, he drew a full-length portrait of the false Man of Pleasure.

“ He is one who, desirous of being more happy than any man can be, is less happy than most men are.

“ One who seeks happiness everywhere but where it is to be found.

“ One who out-toils the labourer, not only without his wages, but paying dearly for it.

“ He is an immortal being that has but two marks of a man about him—upright stature, and the power of playing the fool, which a monkey has not.

“ He is an immortal being that triumphs in this single, deplorable, and yet false, hope—that he shall be as happy

as a monkey when they are both dead ; though he despairs of being so while yet alive.

“ He is an immortal being, that would lose none of its most darling delights, if he were a brute in the mire ; but would lose them all entirely, if he were an angel in heaven. . . .

“ To be more explicit, I would gather three particular branches from this general root of happiness.

“ There is no man of pleasure without his Eve, no Eve without her serpent, no serpent without its sting. He that knows not the pure delight and ever-growing tenderness of chaste love, knows not the most that the fairest can bestow.”

Two letters completed the series, entitled respectively *Life's Review* and *The Dignity of Man*, in the former of which Young appealed specially to the aged. And to the same laggards on the stage of life he addressed the warning that the world was outworn to them and they to the world.

“ The world, which knows its own interest, quits us, as rats a ruined house ; if we knew ours, should we not quit the world, as bees an exhausted flower ? We can make no more honey of it ; its sweets are gone. Where are its formerly sweet delusions, its airy castles, and glittering spires ? Are we not left on a lonely, barren, briery heath, to grope our weary way, through the dusk of life, to our final home ” ?

Nor was the personal note absent from these solemn exhortations. For his own part, he fancied his campaign would soon be over ; “ I think I hear the Master call.” The worldly wishes which an old man sent out, he added, as if thinking of his own futile appeals to obdurate statesmen, “ are like Noah's dove ; they cannot find whereon to light, and must return to his own heart again for rest.” It was not for him to be scheming still ; “ stretching out a trembling hand, which wants to be supported to grasp at the nothing that comes next.” The world into which he had been born was underground ; yet he would fain that his pen might be of some service to the aged, his nearest relations now those of his own blood were no



more. And as his twofold apology for the levity and vehemence of his appeals, he declared, on the one hand, his willingness that his reader should laugh at him if he also laughed at himself, and, on the other, that "no man can strike fire with a feather."

Although published without Young's name, the secret of the authorship of *The Centaur not Fabulous* soon became widely known. The Duchess of Portland had been pledged to silence, but she could not resist sharing her knowledge with Mrs. Delany, and that lady in turn disclosed the "hint" given her by proclaiming the book to be "by the author of *Night Thoughts*." Hence it is not surprising that even such a casual visitor to London as Dr. Thomas Blackwell, of Aberdeen, shared the secret. His opinion of the book, communicated in a letter to a friend in Scotland, was doubtless qualified by his connection with court circles. "Nothing stirring in the way of literature," he wrote: "some fine thoughts in Dr. Young's *Centaur*s are *désparés* by the timid stile; it is half verse, half prose, cut and *empoulé* like the *Night Thoughts*."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Lady Echlin, in a letter to Richardson, referred to it as "that good book," adding: "Sorry am I to know it is a melancholy truth: but I did not think there were so many monsters in human shape, as I now believe there are, from the bad reception that excellent lesson meets with in the world. Can they be rational creatures, who ridicule the author, and impudently call the reverend doctor a madman? God Almighty grant a speedy reformation."<sup>2</sup>

Save for the publication of *The Centaur not Fabulous*, the year was uneventful for the rector of Welwyn. Little of his correspondence has survived, two letters and a brief note exhausting the records for 1755. The earliest of these, dated the 5th of February, was addressed to Mrs. Delany, who was staying at Bulstrode, and had reported thence news of the convalescence of the younger members of the family.

"I humbly thank her Grace for conveying to me so very

<sup>1</sup> *Ninth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission*, ii, 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, v, 70.

good news by so worthy and elegant a hand ; and I congratulate you, Madam, and the world on the Divine mercy to that noble and virtuous house in the day of fear and affliction.

“ The day of affliction is the day of glory to the Christian ! What you say of the Duchess claims indeed my admiration, but by no means gives me any surprise. Her former conduct so prepared me for it, that all surprise at aught commendable in her Grace is over.

“ I accept the Dean’s good wishes with great gratitude, nor is it the only favour I am obliged to him for. I have lately read his excellent sermons : they are well-timed, the world wanted them, and they prescribe well for the present distempers. But I fear Dr. Hays has the advantage of him ; as physicians, generally speaking, are more successful in their attack on diseases than divines.

“ I bless God I am very well in health ; but my hurt eye is still a check on my pen.”<sup>1</sup>

That Young was in good health Mrs. Delany was able to see for herself in the following May, when she called at Welwyn, and was “ regaled with excellent bread and butter, and more excellent conversation ; Dr. Young in fine spirits and good health.” Late in the summer came the usual invitation to Bulstrode, the reasons for the non-acceptance of which were explained by the poet in his reply of the 7th of September.

“ I have public duty always three days in the week, and often much more ; and at present I have no curate, nor can I get any. It is therefore utterly out of my power to accept your Grace’s kind and most obliging invitation, which otherwise I should have accepted with the utmost satisfaction, and shall ever remember with the greatest gratitude.

“ I congratulate you, Madam, and the public on Lord Titchfield’s recovery ; the public is your rival, nor will you be sorry for such a rival in your love.

“ With what a relish you speak of your most amiable friend !

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, iii, 326.

Your Grace has an excellent pencil, I never saw a more lovely family-piece, except at Bulstrode.

“ They, Madam, that are happy in their friends and near relations enjoy more than any other circumstances of life can give ; and that this for ever may be your case is the prayer of one who has missed friends where they were most to be expected, and found them, thanks to your Grace, where they were least deserved, by no means an uncommon case.”<sup>1</sup>

In the succeeding year Young had ample employment for his gifts as a consoler, for death and sickness were frequent visitors at Bulstrode. A letter of the duchess was, he said, an emblem of the world in that it was “ full of misfortunes and death. What reason have they to bless Heaven,” he added, “ who escape so many chances against them ! ” That reflection had been prompted by the death of his friend’s mother, Lady Oxford. In the May of 1756 he was writing to Mrs. Delany, who, from the Duchess of Portland’s London house, had sent him news of the death of the Lady Margaret, and the dangerous illness of the Ladies Elizabeth and Harriet, and Lord Titchfield.

“ What very ill news you send me ! I knew not that her Grace’s misfortune spread so wide : I knew not that so many of those nearest her heart had been ill. God restore them to their perfect health, and so give double comfort to her Grace in the possession of her endangered felicities !

“ If, Madam, I see London before you leave it, I shall think my journey very happily timed, but as at present I have no curate, and pretty much duty, I fear I shall not be able to wait on you and the Dean, to whom my best wishes and respects, unless your stay is longer in town.

“ I beg my humble duty to my Lord Duke and her Grace. Though, Madam, I share with you in a tender sense of all that pains her, yet I cannot but congratulate her at the same

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 321-2.

time on having the very best cordials under any distress—a good head, a good heart, and a good friend.”<sup>1</sup>

If he wrote to the duchess on this occasion, his letter has been lost, but in his epistle of the 29th of July death and sorrow and sickness still engage his pen.

“Heaven re-establish your health and restore your spirits, without either of which the living have little to boast above the dead. Last week Lady Cowper gave me an account of Mrs. Delany, but mentioned not her indisposition, of which, I suppose, she was ignorant, for she professes a great value for her. For the sake of all that know her, as well as her own, I heartily hope her perfect recovery.

“But to come still nearer to your Grace’s heart, I congratulate you on Lady Harriet’s health, nor less on Lord Titchfield’s late-gained reputation. May he one day be the pride of the nation, as he is now of the University, and then the public will thank your Grace for giving it an ornament which posterity shall not forget.

“Poor Lord Andover! but as I know not his character, I cannot tell if his death is to be deplored, or envied. Nothing is more to be envied than the death of the good. Last night I buried a most valuable woman, and her as profligate husband, now on his death-bed, I shall bury soon. He was her death by his unkindness, and his own by his debauchery. The difference of their last hours, to which I have been privy, carries in it an instruction which no words can express.

“Your Grace is so kind as to inquire after my health: I have had a very dangerous fever, which was not easily subdued, but God Almighty is pleased to continue me here longer at my peril. I say, Madam, at my peril, as, if we do not truly repent, longer life will prove in the event a curse, and if we do, death, which we so much dread, is the greatest blessing.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, iii, 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 322-3.

During the closing months of this year and the early months of the next, Young found time to undertake the task he had declined at Curll's invitation, namely, the revision of his own works for a collected edition. "Dr. Young is very well," Richardson reported in December. "He is about to give the world a collection of his works, at the entreaty of booksellers, who have a property in them, in four twelves volumes." This was the edition which occasioned Horace Walpole's tribute in his letter to the Earl of Strafford: "I know nothing else new but a new edition of Dr. Young's works. If your lordship thinks like me, who hold that even in his most frantic rhapsodies there are innumerable fine things, you will like to have this edition."

On the July day on which Walpole was penning those lines at his Thames-side retreat, the subject of them was playing the host to the kind of visitor he loved best, to none other, in fact, than a young maiden, his friend Richardson's daughter Anne. The poet was a great favourite with all the novelist's girls; they were ever ready to spend a holiday at "good Dr. Young's." On this occasion Miss Anne seems to have been away longer than usual, so long, indeed, that Richardson feared she was outstaying her welcome. But Young speedily undeceived him on that point.

"What you call our trouble, is, indeed, our very great pleasure. Miss Nancy is a very agreeable and sensible companion; and my best fruits, which I from the first proposed as her chief entertainment, are not yet ripe. You must not rob her of them, and us of her. Trouble not yourself about her conveyance; I myself will deliver her, God willing, safe into your hands, when the hour is come; which, I trust, is yet at a considerable distance; for, indeed, she is as welcome to me as if she was my own. Besides, dear Sir, consider, either Miss Richardson flatters us, or her health is rather bettered by this air, which is good, and I persuade her to take it on horseback as often as it is agreeable to her.

"As Juvenal says of a boxing-match, I think it is a blessing,

*paucis cum dentibus*, to escape out of the hands of the Galeni. Mine have been distempered ever since, and rather worse than before. I am sorry, very sorry, for the bad account you give of yours. And your saying that our friend Wilson innocently betrayed you into it, makes me think that what Solomon says of enemies and friends may be applied to fools and the wise: 'Separate thyself from fools, and take heed of the wise.' Though integrity is but scarce, yet there is more integrity than infallibility in the world." <sup>1</sup>

But the poet was to fall again into the hands of Galen's disciples ere the year ended. In the autumn and winter of 1757, indeed, he was to suffer the severest illness of his life. Richardson was so alarmed at the news from Welwyn that he dispatched thither an unusually anxious and affectionate letter, to which Young replied on the 23rd of October.

"O my dear friend! little do you think how you oppress me by your great goodness to me; and more still by the uneasiness you yourself are under. My spirits fail me; I am very low; and am designing for Bath as my last resource.

"However, considering my time of day, I bless God that it is not still worse with me. What I suffer, I look on as necessary discipline; and humbly hope it may be some small expiation of great offences; and I am bound in reason to consider it as a blessing, if God grants me the grace of patience and resignation under it.

"To the divine mercy and favour I recommend you and yours, with a heart full of gratitude and sincere affection." <sup>2</sup>

To this letter Richardson at once sent a sympathetic reply. He was relieved, he said, to learn his friend was going to Bath, and had good hopes of its waters in his case, for, he added, "your nerves are good, your constitution is sound, and your

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 38-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 40.

muscular flesh is firm." And would he not give him the favour of his company for a few days on his journey thither? Richardson had already bethought him how he might contribute to Young's comfort at Bath. "I have pleasure in thinking," he wrote, "that I have a daughter there who loves and honours you, as all mine do; and indeed every one does who has the pleasure of knowing you. Mr. Ditcher, her husband, will rejoice to have it in his power to serve you. Mr. Leake and his agreeable family will do all they can to make the place, and the situation in it which you shall choose, convenient. Come to me, dearest Sir; we will write to my daughter and her husband to provide for you the conveniences you shall choose. So that from Salisbury-court to Bath, shall be all the way a preconcerted journey; and you shall immediately enter there on the well-aired lodgings, that my daughter will cause to be ready for you."

Some weeks elapsed ere the poet derived any benefit from his "cure" at Bath, but at length, on the 3rd of January, 1758, he was able to report some amendment in the following letter to Richardson. The parcel of sermons to which he referred doubtless consisted of the discourses he had delivered at court in the capacity of royal chaplain.

"Numberless are your favours: Mr. and Mrs. Ditcher are to me extremely kind. I bless God, I at last find benefit from the waters, as to appetite, rest, and spirits. I have now for three nights had pretty good rest, after two sleepless months; and I believe that persevering in the waters is the point, at least in my complaint.

"But at my time of day, how dare I complain of small things, on the brink of the grave, and at the door of eternity! What a mercy that I am still here! What a fall have I seen around me! I was here twenty years ago; and scarce find one of the generation alive.

"I rejoice, I greatly rejoice, to hear that you are better. Might not Bath be as much your friend as mine? In some points our cases are similar.

“ I think you told me in a letter that you once found benefit from it ; if you could try it again, I would attend you to your last hour.

“ But, say you, are you idle all this time ? No, I am on a great work. How great a work is it to learn to die with safety and comfort ? This is, as it should be, my business, unless I think it too much to spend my superannuated hours on that which ought to have been the business of my whole life.

“ I am now, as it is high time, setting my house in order, and therefore desire you to send by the carrier the parcel of sermons, which were packed up when I was in town, that I may commit them to the flames.

“ And please to favour me with my full and long debt to you ; for I am in pain to have it discharged.”<sup>1</sup>

For several years Young had neglected his month at court, procuring a substitute for the performance of duties which had doubtless become distasteful to him, not merely because his claims for preferment had been slighted, but because of the mockery of preaching to such an audience. But, on the recovery of his health, and his return to Welwyn in the spring of 1758, he seems to have decided to resume his duties for once when his month came round. And for that occasion he resolved to prepare a special discourse, one which would be worthy of printing and of dedicating to the King. The sermon and dedication were written before the end of April, for on the last day of that month he wrote to solicit Richardson's advice on several points in his address to George II. Was there, he asked, anything “ mean ” in what he had said about himself and his “ long service at court ” ? Richardson's reply did honour to his judgment. “ As to the dedication,” he wrote, “ I am far from thinking your mentioning length of service *mean*: will it not rather be thought, or misunderstood, to carry with it something of complaint, or even of reproach ; and as if your neglecting your month for some

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 43-4.



years past were owing to resentment? . . . Suppose, sir, you stop at your well-known seniority in the present chaplainship, without carrying the hint to Leicester-house; leaving it upon them to recollect, that you could have gone further with justice, had preferment been your sole view. It is right, however, not to be quite silent on the subject." Young saw the force of his friend's objection; he returned him a thousand thanks for restoring him to "common sense"; and so corrected his dedication that in the printed form the only reference to his protracted chaplaincy consisted in his subscribing himself the "ancient servant" of his Majesty.

While this correspondence was in progress there was on its way to Richardson a letter which must have given great pleasure to him and his reverend friend. The fame of the *Night Thoughts* had reached Germany, and won the unstinted admiration of Klopstock and his wife, to the latter of whom Richardson had communicated the news of Young's ill-health. Mrs. Klopstock's reply was both sympathetic and ambitious. "Oh that his dear instructive life may be extended!" she wrote, "if it is not against his own wishes. I read lately in the newspapers, that Dr. Young was made Bishop of Bristol; I think it must be another Young. How could the King make him *only* Bishop! and Bishop of *Bristol*, while the place of *Canterbury* is vacant! I think the King knows not at all there is a Young who illustrates his reign."

If George II had forgotten, he was soon to be reminded by the discourse alluded to above. As the sermon was in type before it was preached in the June of this year, its delivery was speedily followed by publication, and an early copy seems to have been sent to the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the kindly Thomas Secker, whose frank letter of the 8th of July was doubtless inspired by that courtesy. "Good Dr. Young," he wrote, "I have long wondered, that more suitable notice of your great merit hath not been taken by persons in power: but how to remedy the omission I see not. No encouragement hath ever been given to me to mention things of this nature to his Majesty. And therefore, in all likelihood, the only

consequence of doing it would be weakening the little influence which I may possibly have on some other occasions. Your fortune and your reputation set you above the need of advancement ; and your sentiments, above that concern for it, on your own account, which, on that of the public, is sincerely felt by your loving brother, THO. CANT."

All this had the natural result of disturbing Young's equanimity and reviving his hopes of preferment. Or, at least, it deepened his curiosity to learn why he had been so persistently slighted. Hence the inquiry which he addressed to the Duchess of Portland on the 9th of July.

"I have lately by a dedication taken on me to put his Majesty in mind of my long service, but, I take for granted, without any manner of effect. I perceive by your Grace that all hopes are over ; but though hopes are over, my curiosity is not ; that is rather increased. For as I was chaplain to his Majesty, even at Leicester House, and as all other chaplains there were soon preferred after his Majesty's accession but myself, and as many, many years ago the Duke of Newcastle promised me, through the Duke of Portland's kindly presenting me to him, preferment after two then to be provided for by him before me, and as there is no instance to be found of any other so long in service under total neglect, there must be some particular reason for my very particular fate, which reason, as I cannot possibly guess at it, I most ardently long to know.

"Your Grace's interest with persons in power is at least so great as to be able to gratify my very natural and very strong curiosity a little in this point.

"This may seem to your Grace an extraordinary request ; but please, Madam, to consider, here has a thing happened which never happened before, and which very probably will never happen again. How natural then for any, especially for him who is most concerned in it, to wish, if possible, to know the cause of it, for I am not conscious of the least cause I have given for it." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 323-4.

Two months later preferment was offered, but not by the Prime Minister. Nor was it to a bishopric or even a deanery. A living in the gift of the Duke of Portland fell vacant, and the duchess offered it to her old friend. Young's acknowledgment is specially noteworthy because it shows his keen interest in the welfare of his son. The letter was written on the 7th of September, 1758.

“ Your Grace is extremely kind in the noble offer you are pleased to make me ; whether it is tenable with Welwyn or not, I cannot tell ; but be it so, or not, your Grace's goodness lays me under an eternal obligation. If it should not be tenable with Welwyn, will your Grace pardon me if I ask a bold question ? Can your great indulgence go so far as to give it to my son ? As that would greatly increase my great obligation, that would much more than double the favour of giving it to myself.

“ My son, Madam, is a student at Balliol College in Oxford ; he is between twenty-five and twenty-six years of age ; I left the choice of his way of life to himself ; he chose Divinity ; his tutor writes me word that he makes a laudable progress in it, and he will take orders very soon.

“ I thought it my duty to let your Grace know something of the person in whose behalf I presume to ask so very great a favour.

“ If, Madam, I can obtain that request I now presume to make, I shall look upon all former disappointments as advantages, when ending in what I so very much desire.”<sup>1</sup>

Young's reluctance to accept a living not tenable with Welwyn can be easily understood : for a bishopric he would no doubt have been content to abandon his twenty-six years' home ; but a lesser cause would be no inducement to leave a spot associated with the happiest years of his life. Besides, he was composing again. “ Dr. Young is finely recovered,” reported Richardson on the 11th of September, “ and, if I

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 324.

guess right, will one day oblige the world with a small piece on Original Writing and Writers." So there was every reason why, failing a bishopric, his domestic peace should not be disturbed.

That "small piece" was published in the summer of 1759, with the title of *Conjectures on Original Composition, in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison*. It appears to have been put into type earlier in the year, and a letter of Richardson's, written in May, indicates that some of the delay in publication was due to corrections he suggested and to the author's desire that Dr. Johnson should hear the piece read before it was given to the world. A gathering for the latter purpose duly took place at Richardson's house, that being the first occasion on which Johnson and Young met.

No contribution to the literature of literary criticism has been so much overlooked as this remarkable essay, though the fact that a second edition of the pamphlet was called for within six months of its publication would indicate that its merits were appreciated by Young's contemporaries. In the manner of its writing it was an astonishing performance for a man approaching his seventy-seventh year, for, as Mrs. Delany remarked, it was written "with the spirit of twenty-five." The critic was dubious of his own powers when he began his task; he despaired, he said, of being able to break "through the frozen obstructions of age, and care's incumbent cloud, into that flow of thought and brightness of expression which subjects so polite" required; but in extenuation of his "spilling ink and spoiling paper so late in life" he asked his readers: "If those are held honourable who in a hand benumbed by time have grasped the just sword in defence of their country, shall they be less esteemed whose unsteady pen vibrates to the last in the cause of religion, of virtue, of learning?"

Commenting briefly on the ever-debatable question as to whether too many books were not written, he declared that, granting sound understanding and a desire for the public good, the more composition the better. Then he passed to his grand division of writers into originals and imitators, excusing

the latter in so far as they copy the models and not the manners of their exemplars, and highly extolling the former for the new realms of imagination they throw open to the human soul. To the question why originals were so few, he answered—"illustrious examples engross, prejudice, and intimidate." In short, learning was apt to repress a genius.

"Rome was a powerful ally to many states; ancient authors are our powerful allies; but we must take heed that they do not succour, till they enslave, after the manner of Rome. Too formidable an idea of their superiority, like a spectre, would fright us out of proper use of our wits, and dwarf our understanding, by making a giant of theirs. Too great awe for them lays genius under restraint, and denies it that free scope, that full elbow-room, which is requisite for striking its most masterly strokes. Genius is a master-workman, learning is but an instrument; and an instrument, though most valuable, yet not always indispensable. Heaven will not admit of a partner in the accomplishment of some favourite spirits; but, rejecting all human means, assumes the whole glory to itself. Have not some, though not famed for erudition, so written, as almost to persuade us that they shone brighter and soared higher for escaping the boasted aid of that proud ally?"

Among the modern originals who refused to be hampered by pedantry, Young gave the first place to Shakespeare.

"Who knows whether Shakespeare might not have thought less, if he had read more? Who knows if he might not have laboured under the load of Jonson's learning, as Enceladus under *Ætna*? His mighty genius, indeed, through the most mountainous oppression would have breathed out some of his inextinguishable fire; yet, possibly, he might not have risen up into that giant, that much more than common man, at which we now gaze with amazement and delight. Perhaps he was as learned as his dramatic province required; for,

whatever other learning he wanted, he was master of two books, unknown to many of the profoundly read, though books which the last conflagration alone can destroy—the book of nature, and that of man. These he had by heart, and has transcribed many admirable pages of them into his immortal works. These are the fountain-head, whence the Castalian streams of original composition flow; and these are often mudded by other waters,—though waters, in their distinct channel, most wholesome and pure: as two chemical liquors, separately as clear as crystal, grow foul by mixture, and offend the sight. So that he had not only as much learning as his dramatic province required, but, perhaps, as it could safely bear. If Milton had spared some of his learning, his muse would have gained more glory than he would have lost by it.”

As that passage suggests, Jonson was counted among the imitators, and Pope too, though in a later passage the latter is described as a “correct poet.” His chief offence in Young’s view, was that slavish devotion to rhyme which he shared with Dryden, who, however, was praised for being an “inimitable original” in his ode. Of his contemporaries the critic praised most highly Richardson and Addison, the former for making “a convert to virtue of a species of composition once most its foe,” and the latter for the lofty character of his writings. Young’s prophecy as to Addison’s fame has been singularly fulfilled.

“Addison wrote little in verse, much in sweet, elegant, Virgilian prose; so let me call it, since Longinus calls Herodotus most Homeric, and Thucydides is said to have formed his style on Pindar. Addison’s compositions are built with the finest materials, in the taste of the ancients, and (to speak his own language) on truly classic ground; and though they are the delight of the present age, yet am I persuaded that they will receive more justice from posterity. I never read him but I am struck with such a disheartening idea of perfection,

that I drop my pen. And, indeed, far superior writers should forget his compositions, if they would be greatly pleased with their own."

But it is not so much for its literary verdicts as for its stimulating spirit that the *Conjectures on Original Composition* is so notable. The veteran poet strove to inspire his comrades of the pen with a higher courage than they had ever known by holding out the hope of the advent of greater writers than the most famous of the much-lauded ancients.

"And why not? For, consider,—since an impartial Providence scatters talents indifferently, as through all orders of persons, so through all periods of time;—since a marvellous light, unenjoyed of old, is poured on us by revelation, with larger prospects extending our understanding, with an inestimable prize setting our passions on fire, thus strengthening every power that enables composition to shine; since there has been no fall in man on this side Adam, who left no works, and the work of all other ancients are our auxiliars against themselves, as being perpetual spurs to our ambition, and shining lamps in our path to fame; since this world is a school, as well for intellectual as moral advance, and the longer human nature is at school, the better scholar it should be; since, as the moral world expects its glorious millennium, the world intellectual may hope, by the rules of analogy, for some superior degrees of excellence to crown her later scenes; nor may it only hope, but must enjoy them too; for Tully, Quintilian, and all true critics allow, that virtue assists genius, and that the writer will be more able, when better is the man:—all these particulars, I say, considered, why should it seem altogether impossible, that Heaven's latest editions of the human mind may be the most correct and fair; that the day may come when the moderns may proudly look back on the comparative darkness of former ages, on the children of antiquity, reputing Homer and Demosthenes as the dawn of divine genius, and Athens as the cradle of infant-fame?"

All this, however, was independent of the supreme purpose for which Young took his pen in hand. His chief purpose in writing was to tell the story of Addison's death-bed, to amplify Tickell's lines—

“ He taught us how to live, and, O, too high  
A price for knowledge, taught us how to die.”

Tickell had told him, “ before his eyes were dry,” how Addison had sent for a friend, how that friend had hastened to his side to receive his last wishes, and how with his final breath the essayist had exclaimed, “ See in what peace a Christian can die ! ” That was Young's moral ; Addison's “ grand work was his death.” In the original draft of his essay he had placed that anecdote in the forefront of his argument ; but, acting on Richardson's advice, he eventually transferred it to the end, where, as the novelist said, the critic and scholar might properly give place to the Christian divine.

During the previous summer Young had declined an invitation to Bulstrode because he was “ confined for want of an assistant,” and that disability was not removed until the June of 1759, when the Rev. John Jones, already mentioned, became his curate. Even then, however, the poet was not able to pay his accustomed late summer visit to her Grace, probably owing to her own absence from home. For her eldest daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, had become the wife of Viscount Weymouth, and the affectionate mother naturally took the first opportunity to visit her child in her new home at Longleat. Young had sent his courtly congratulations when the engagement was announced, and now, on the 28th of October, wrote to felicitate the duchess on her own and her daughter's happiness. The second daughter, Lady Harriet, was at home, still “ fancy free,” but Lord Titchfield seems to have been absent on the grand tour.

“ From my heart I rejoice at the delightful scene of your Grace's family happiness in all the whole and lovely branches of it ; for that is a happiness of all other under Heaven the



most valuable, except that which is in the still narrower space of our own bosoms.

“ May the pleasure, and satisfaction, which you found at Longleat be but the beginning of those joys that shall arise from prudent and fortunate disposal of those you love in the marriage-state, in which we throw the die for the highest stake in human life.

“ To make that hazardous die turn up aright, nothing bids fairer than that similitude of tempers which you have discovered in my Lord and Lady Weymouth. It not only gives present happiness, but its promises of future are very great, because it is a private *bisque* in our sleeve which the caprices of outward fortune can never rob us of.

“ As far as I can judge of Lady Harriet’s temper—I think I have observed it—it seems to me to be such that it will be a difficulty on your Grace to find its fellow in our sex. May she find it, or, what will be more to her honour and pleasure, make it, in the man she honours with her hand.

“ As for my Lord Titchfield, may you ever, Madam, receive accounts of him, and news from him, as agreeable as was your last, that your heart, which, you say, is with him, and which, I say, is then in good and sweet company, may for ever rejoice in him, and in the prospect of his conveying his mother’s and father’s virtues into future times, to bless those who, by his laudable conduct, will probably be put in mind of days past, and recollect to whom they owe such a son, and so be the less surprised, though not less pleased, with what they love or admire in him.”<sup>1</sup>

Young’s good wishes for his friend’s eldest son were to be largely realised. If his two tenures of office as Prime Minister did not place him among the most illustrious occupants of that position, his unwearied industry as Home Secretary was a proof of his sense of responsibility, while his blameless private life did perpetuate his parents’ virtues.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 325.

## CHAPTER IX

LAST YEARS

1760-1765

WHEN posthumous retribution takes the form of insults to exhumed bodies, a revulsion of sympathy is likely to create forgetfulness of the victims' offences; but, short of such barbarous vindictiveness, it really seems necessary to devise some form of punishment for those literary criminals who do not hesitate to malign the characters of famous men. If such a code of justice is ever framed, one of its severest sentences would have to be passed on that Rev. Sir Herbert Croft who perpetrated the biography of Edward Young for Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

Nor is it difficult to explain why. It is not merely, as a writer long ago complained, that Croft was "not always candid, nor always perspicuous," nor even that he was too fond of such gratuitous sneers as that poets do not make the "best parents" or the "best clergymen," but that he did not scruple to make absolutely false statements with a view, presumably, to belittling the poet's character; and that notwithstanding his audacious reproof of those previous biographers who were, he said, careless in narrating matters of which "proofs, with little trouble, might have been procured."

A capital example of Croft's distortion of the truth is provided by that passage in which he deals with Young's will, a passage, be it remembered, which is preceded by statements which imply that he had before him the document in question. Here is the paragraph—

"It may teach mankind the uncertainty of worldly friendships, to know that Young, either by surviving those he loved, or by outliving their affections, could only recollect the names of two *friends*, his housekeeper and a hatter, to mention in his will; and it may serve to repress that testamentary pride,

which too often seeks for sounding names and titles, to be informed that the author of the *Night Thoughts* did not blush to leave a legacy to his friend Henry Stevens, a hatter at the Temple-gate. Of these two remaining friends, one went before Young."

Such is the statement made by Croft in 1780. Kindred with it was the assertion of the *Biographia Dramatica* to the effect that Young's appointment of his curate as his "sole executor" was intended as a slight on his son; but for that error Croft had no responsibility. What has to be laid to his charge, however, is that he started the falsehood which all subsequent writers slavishly copied. An anonymous writer improved upon Croft to the extent of affirming that in the disposal of his property to his son Young reserved "only a legacy to his friend Stevens," while Dr. Doran merely credits him with the two bequests to his housekeeper and the hatter. This legend is repeated *ad nauseam* in all sketches of Young's life, and was but slightly qualified by Sir Leslie Stephen in the *Dictionary of National Biography* by the addition of a third to the list of beneficiaries.

If Croft, as he implied, had Young's will before him when he wrote, he was a perjurer; if he had not, he is equally convicted for not consulting those proofs which "with little trouble, might have been procured." For, of course, the will was in existence then as it is to-day.

And what does an examination of that document show? Not that Young "could only recollect the names of *two* friends," but that in the will and the codicil he set down the names of four relatives and sixteen friends to whom he left bequests or memorial rings—a total of twenty against Croft's two! Nor was that all. In the body of the will, which the poet wrote with his own hand on the 5th of February, 1760, he made numerous other bequests, including his gilt plate and other furniture to the communion table of his church, £100 to his successor for the repair of the chancel and the parsonage house, £5 apiece to the four poorest housekeepers

of Welwyn, £10 each to his four servants, and £50 to All Souls College. Young's family legacies included his silver bread-basket and £50 to his nephew, the Rev. Richard Harris, and £50 to his cousin Youngs of London; to his curate, "the Rev. and worthy Mr. Jones," he left £200 in recognition of his "pious assistance" in the parish, while to Mrs. Hallows he bequeathed some "wrought work for chairs" and £1,000. "After the payment of the legacies above," he added, "I give all the residue of my possessions to my son." There was one exception. Both in the will and the codicil he charged his three executors to burn all his manuscripts immediately on his death, saving his Book of Accounts. This instruction was repeated in a postscript addressed "To Mrs. Hallows," who was assured that by carrying out his orders she would "oblige" her deceased friend. To the codicil he added a clause expressing his "earnest desire" that there might not be any "disputes" over his "testamentary concerns," little anticipating the falsehoods of the libellous Croft.

Other slanders from the same pen were included in the life written for Dr. Johnson, but were deleted by him. And in the obscurity of Croft's manuscript they reposed until Isaac Disraeli thought fit to print them in *The Literary Character*. As an accessory after the fact Disraeli deserves as much blame as Croft, for if he had taken the pains to collate his adopted assertions with the facts of Young's life he would have learnt that as Mrs. Hallows did not take charge of the poet's household until three years after the completion of the *Night Thoughts* she could not have "assisted" in their production, and that to describe Young as neglecting his wife while he wrote the *Night Thoughts* was a cruel libel seeing that it was the death of that wife which inspired the poem. Peter Cunningham recorded that he had seen Croft's performance bound up in a volume bearing the title of Johnson's *Beauties and Deformities*, and the life is often carelessly quoted as Johnson's work. It is surely high time it was ejected from the distinguished company it has kept too long and described as Croft's *Deformities and Calumnies*.

Apart from the testimony of his will, Young's correspondence is sufficient evidence that he did not outlive the affections of his friends. Nay, so lovable was the nature of the poet that he made a new friend at an age when such acquisitions are unusual. And it should be added as another proof of the charitable disposition revealed by his will that two months after he had written that document he gave a sum of £1,500 in Old South Sea annuities for the endowment of a school in Welwyn for educating, clothing, and apprenticing the necessitous children of the parish.

But to return to his new friend. He was a barrister, George Keate by name, who, after several years' sojourn on the Continent, during which he had contracted a close friendship with Voltaire, had returned to London and begun that career of authorship which he was to continue for nearly thirty years. His earliest production was *Ancient and Modern Rome*, a poem in blank verse, a copy of which he sent to the veteran author of the *Night Thoughts*. This began a correspondence, which soon led to visits to Welwyn. In the letter which accompanied his poem, Keate, knowing Young had made the acquaintance of Voltaire many years earlier, assured him that the rumour of the French writer's death was false. That led to an exchange of views on Voltaire's writings, Young, however, confining himself to a present of that *Sea-Piece* in which he had expressed his opinion of the famous Frenchman. He had ordered the sheets, he said, to be sent Keate from his "dear friend Mr. Richardson's press" as a mark of his "regard."

To that "dear friend" he wrote on the 8th of September, 1760, and from several expressions used in that letter it is obvious his sight was failing.

"I have received the papers: and how greatly am I concerned that I cannot take advantage of the infinite pains you have taken for me; but every day puts it more and more out of my power.

"Pray give my humble duty to the Speaker, and tell him

that I greatly enjoy his so kind remembrance of me ; and long to kiss his hand.

“ I find little assistance from art ; but my complaint itself, in one view, is an excellent glass, making things invisible more legible than they were before.

“ It is with difficulty that I can read what your friendship, and genius, and virtue, has sent me : but still greater difficulty am I under sufficiently to thank you for it. To write is uneasy to me : must I despair of seeing you ? or have I that pleasure in life still to come ? Success and peace be ever with you ! Amen ! which is the natural style of those that have entered the intermediate state between this scene and the next : a dim apartment it is, which excludes action, but favours thought.”<sup>1</sup>

One of Richardson's numerous correspondents was the Rev. Mark Hildesley, who by this date was Bishop of Sodor and Man. As he had been vicar of Hitchen for many years, Dr. Hildesley was well acquainted with Young, and consequently was deeply concerned to learn from Richardson that their illustrious friend was in danger of losing his sight. His letter of the 11th of November is an affectionate tribute to his old Hertfordshire colleague.

“ I am sorry to hear the account you give of Dr. Young's impending misfortune, whereby the public, as well as himself, are likely to be such great sufferers. You do me the honour to join me with yourself in calling him our friend. It is an honour I should be very proud of sufficient title to. The friendship of so valuable a person, in every respect, I was ever, indeed, ambitious to obtain and cultivate whilst he was my neighbour for upwards of twenty years ; and for that end, have often intruded upon him, as I did upon another certain genius ; and in which borrowed credit of knowing and endeavouring to be known to worthy and ingenious persons, I cannot say but I have sometimes happily succeeded. The impertinence

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ii, 57-8.

of my frequent visits to him (for impertinent must that liberty have been deemed, which in so many years failed to receive the encouragement of ever seeing him once at my house, beyond the threshold of my door), however, was amply rewarded; forasmuch as, I can truly say, he never received me but with agreeable, open complacency; and I never left him but with profitable pleasure and improvement. He was, one or other, the most modest, the most patient of contradiction, the most informing and entertaining, of any man (at least of any man who had so just pretensions to pertinacity and reserve) I ever conversed with. . . . I hope to hear a better account of him, as to the malady he is apprehensive of; for he is a man, I think, of singular importance to the Christian world. I pray Heaven may think so too.”<sup>1</sup>

It was a few days later, on the 20th of November, that, in a letter to the Duchess of Portland, Young recalled that saying of Addison, recorded in a previous chapter, to the effect that he would prefer to die in the summer, adding as his own reflection—

“Summer scatters us abroad into the fields to gather wisdom there, if we please; the storms of winter drive us back to shelter, and contemplation gives place to company. Happy they that enjoy such as those which your Grace says are now with you! Music is a delicious entertainment, and the only one that I know of, which earth enjoys in common with heaven. Long may you enjoy those pleasures here which bid fairest to end in such as will never cease.”<sup>2</sup>

Pensive as is the spirit of that note, it must not be inferred that Young had lost all his old cheerfulness. There is, indeed, direct evidence to the contrary, for it was in this November month that Mrs. Montagu paid him a surprise visit and found his company as delightful as ever. “I called on my old

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, v, 142-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 325-6.

friend Dr. Young at Welwyn," she wrote, " and had the pleasure of conversing with so extraordinary a being as a polite hermit and a witty saint. He has quitted the dreams of Pindus, th' Aonian swards, for the nymphs of Solyma ; though they now direct his walk, his mind has still the gait and step of the gayer muses. He spoke with great pleasure of the *Dialogues of the Dead* as a reader of taste, but he relished them more as a man of religion and virtue, who rejoices to see profane history hallowed to virtuous uses and purposes. My agreeable hermit invited me very much to proceed no further on my journey that day ; but I considered the call at the hermitage as only an agreeable episode in my work, and resumed the thread of my journey." <sup>1</sup>

With the opening month of 1761 there came to the venerable rector of Welwyn a meagre and long-delayed recognition of his gifts and character. On the 4th of January the worthy Stephen Hales vacated by death his twenty years' occupancy of the post of clerk of the closet to the dowager Princess of Wales, and, owing to the intercession of the Duchess of Portland, that position was at once offered to Young. According to Richardson, the appointment was made on the recommendation of the young King, George III, but if that were so the poet was not aware of the fact when he wrote to the duchess on the 20th of January.

" I have taken some hours to consider of the very kind offer your Grace is so good as to make me. I am old, and, I bless God, far from want ; but as the honour is great and the duty small, and such as need not take much from my parish, and especially as your Grace seems desirous I should accept it, I do accept it with great gratitude for your remembrance of one who might easily and naturally be forgotten.

" The honour, indeed, is great, and in my sight greater still, as I succeed to so great and good a man. Would to God I could tread in all his other steps as well as in this ! " <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fortescue MSS.* i, 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 326.



Inadequate as was this tardy honour, the fact that the poet had at last received some royal recognition of his merits gave intense satisfaction to his friends, who hastened to convey their sincere congratulations. Among these was his new acquaintance, George Keate, to whose letter the poet replied on the 23rd of February.

“I thank you for your congratulations on my succeeding the worthy Dr. Hales. If I could follow him in all his steps, I should deserve your congratulation indeed. As for my welfare, which you so kindly enquire after, I bless God I am pretty well, but not quite so well as I was forty years ago. But I hope, through divine mercy, forty years hence to be better still. While I continue here, I shall number those amongst my happy hours which you shall please to enliven by your agreeable conversation. This year’s spring will be doubly welcome to me if you make good your promise to, Sir, your obedient humble servant, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

A week or so later Keate published a little volume entitled *Short Account of the Ancient History and present Government and Laws of the Republic of Geneva*, an early copy of which he dispatched to Welwyn, eliciting from Young, on the 15th of March, the following characteristic acknowledgment.

“In the earlier part of my life, I often designed, and much desired to visit Geneva: and though fate denied me that favour, it has granted me a greater; for now, Geneva has made a visit to me, and in so clean and decent a dress, that I am scarce more in love with her wisdom, than with her beauty.

“But as you say, Sir, in your dedication to Mr. Voltaire, this is not designed to be your panegerick, but a graceful acknowledgment of your valuable present to, Sir, your, etc.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992, f. 3.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992, f. 4.

Remembering Young's early and close friendship with Bubb Dodington, the reader will perhaps have wondered at the prolonged absence of his name from the poet's correspondence. No explanation is available save the probable one that Dodington's letters were destroyed in the holocaust of Young's papers. That the friendship remained unbroken, however, is plain from some fragments of correspondence which belong to the October of this year. Dodington, who had now become Lord Melcombe, had written an *Epistle to the Earl of Bute* in gratitude for his elevation to the peerage, but, distrusting his own poetic gifts, had sent his verses to Young for criticism and emendation. Melcombe seems to have chided his friend for not calling upon him, under the supposition that he had been in London recently. "Indeed, my good and honoured Lord," the poet replied, "I have not been in town since January last," an expression which dates Young's final visit to the capital as having been paid in the opening month of 1761. The remainder of his note of the 6th of October was concerned with his emendations of Melcombe's poem.

"I probably may be mistaken in my fancied amendments, but in truth I have done my best, for I was pleased and proud of the task. There is much noble and useful sense in it, which will be more applauded than obeyed. I know but little of my Lord Bute, but admire his uncle as much as you do. My dear Lord, God preserve you, and prepare us both for the 'urn' you mention. Pollio (Bute) will soon visit us there on an equal foot."<sup>1</sup>

There is another brief note of October the 17th suggesting further corrections, to be followed on the 27th of the same month by a letter from Melcombe, accompanied by some verses to Young beginning:—

"Kind companion of my youth,  
Loved for genius, worth and truth!"

That was the last interchange of compliments between the

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com.*, Various Collections, vi, 50.

two friends of which we have any knowledge. Melcombe desired his old companion to leave his verses among his papers "that our friendship should be known when we are gone"; and in the July of the following year he passed away.

That year—1762—was to deprive him of another steadfast friend, for the Duke of Portland died early in May. It was late in the month, however, ere he could bring himself to offer his condolence to the bereaved duchess.

"Of all the severe dispensations, with which a good God is pleased to wean our affections from those objects which can never satisfy them, the most severe is the loss of those we love; and if by His grace and our own prudence we can support our spirits under that, we may congratulate ourselves on a magnanimity that is able to stand the greatest shock of this short scene, into which we were brought with no other intent than by our gratitude for its comforts and acquiescence in its discipline to make ourselves fit candidates for that glorious scene where tears shall be wiped from every eye.

"Madam, may that Friend who will never leave or forsake us continue to speak peace to your soul, by inspiring it with true discernment of those blessings which are wrapped up in the melancholy veil of our present afflictions, and with the most lively hope of those joys which are free from all those unpleasant but wholesome ingredients, which ever embitter the highest happiness of human life."<sup>1</sup>

One effect of that letter was to create in its recipient's heart a desire for yet another visit from its sympathetic writer. But the venerable poet's travelling days were ended; he had made his last journey to Bulstrode's hospitable walls. The Duchess of Portland must have realised that sad truth as she read Young's letter of the 1st of June.

"I read your letter with uncommon pleasure; no sight is more delightful, or more beneficial, than that of a rightly-disposed mind. If Britain could show us more of them it

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 326.

would be an happier world than that in which we now live. The whole secret of being happy ourselves, and making those so that are near us, is to preserve a true relish of life, unabated by any anxious fear of death. Providence has provided for your Grace what may make life most palatable : may it long continue to you, Madam ! Such children, and to them such dispositions ! It is not only a great but a very rare blessing ; and your Grace can scarce look anywhere out of your own family without seeing great cause for rejoicing in it ; and all blessings are doubled by the peculiarity of them.

“ May, Madam, Bulstrode air second your prudence to the perfect re-establishment of your health ; as for my own, which, with that of multitudes more, has suffered much through the whole of the late unwholesome season, it is but indifferent. I have not, I bless God, much pain, but much languor ; if it was less, I would certainly pay my humble duty to your Grace ; if it should be much more, with due submission to the Divine will I must pay my duty to Heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

Some three months later, on the 24th of August, he was writing again, grieving most of all that he could not wait upon his titled friend.

“ I congratulate you on prudence and spirit to go abroad, in quest of rational amusement and its sweet companion, health, which may you ever find. I am sadly confined, by my sight greatly impaired, and other complaints, which I am unwilling to trouble your Grace withal. My case is this : I have been troubled near thirty years with rheumatic pains ; they have been now long entirely ceased, and my physician tells me that Nature throws all that mischief on my eyes and head, which has undergone, and is still undergoing, great discipline, and to very little purpose. This is bad, but what greatly aggravates it is that it denies me the power, which from my soul I ardently desire, of paying that duty which I shall ever owe to your Grace. But notwithstanding all I have said, and all I feel,

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 326-7.

notwithstanding dark days and sleepless nights, such is my age that I must not complain. Heaven's blessed will be done, and may it not deny me the comfort of seeing those in felicity whose welfare I am bound in gratitude to have most at heart."<sup>1</sup>

Meantime he was not forgotten by his latest friend, Keate, who had published a new poem, *Epistle from Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guildford Dudley*, and forwarded a copy to Welwyn. This was in February; in September he wrote again to inquire after Young's health. The poet could give no better account of himself than he had sent to Bulstrode.

"I much thank you for your kind enquiry after my health; I wish I could return such an answer as I know would be most agreeable to you, but it is far otherwise. I am, and have long been much out of order; my sight is so far gone that I am obliged to borrow a hand to write to you. Rheumatic pains of thirty years' standing are entirely ceased, and have been so for half a year: the fatal consequence of which is that the malignity is fallen on my head and eyes; for which I have long undergone and still undergo severe discipline, and to very little purpose.

"When I am capable of writing to you in a more agreeable manner you shall hear further."<sup>2</sup>

Keate was not the only poet who sent his latest compositions to Young; another was Thomas Newcomb, with whom the rector of Welwyn had been intimate for more than forty years. Newcomb had written a *Congratulatory Ode to the Queen*, and in sending a copy to Young had announced that he was engaged upon another poem entitled *The Death of Abel*. Young's letter of acknowledgment was written on the 25th of November.

"My dear old Friend,—And now my *only* dear old friend; for your namesake Colborn is dead. He died last winter, of a cold caught by officiating on the Fast-day. He has left one

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 327.

<sup>2</sup> *B.M. Add. MS.* 30992, f. 7.

daughter, I believe, in pretty good circumstances ; for a friend of his, some time ago, settled upon her £20 a year ; and he, no doubt, has left her something considerable himself.

“ I am pleased with the stanzas you sent me. There is nothing in them of eighty-seven ; and if you have been as young in your attempt on *The Death of Abel*, it will do you credit. That work I have read, and think it deserves that reception it has met with all.

“ The libel you mention, I have not seen ; but I have seen numberless papers, which show that our body politic is far from being in perfect health.

“ As for my own health, I do not love to complain : but one particular I must tell you, that my sight is so far gone as to lay me under the necessity of borrowing a hand to write this. God grant me grace under this darkness, to see more clearly things invisible and eternal ; those great things which you and I must soon be acquainted with ! And why not rejoice at it ? There is not a day of my long life that I desire to repeat ; and, at four score, ‘ it is all labour and sorrow.’

“ What then have we to do ? But one thing remains : and in that one, blessed be God ! by his assistance we are sure of success. Let nothing, therefore, lie heavy on your heart. Let us rely on Him who has done so great things for us ; that lover of souls ; that hearer of prayers, whenever they come from the heart ; and sure rewarder of all those who love him, and put their trust in His mercy. Let us not be discontented with this world : that is bad ; but it is still worse to be satisfied with it, so satisfied, as not to be anxious for something more.

“ My love and best wishes attend you both ; and I am, my good old friend, sincerely yours, etc.

“ P.S.—I am persuaded that you are mistaken as to your age ; you write yourself eighty-seven, which cannot be the case ; for I always thought myself older than you, and I want considerably of that age. If it is worth your while, satisfy me as to this particular.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes*, ii, 698.

Young was mistaken in thinking he was older than Newcomb; although there is some uncertainty about the date of the latter's birth, the probabilities are in favour of 1682, thus making him Young's senior by about a year. Hence at this time the two friends were in their eightieth and seventy-ninth years.

It was hardly surprising, then, that in his last letter of this year to Keate the poet was not able to report any improvement in his health.

"I receive your repeated favours with gratitude; but also with concern. Forbear to oppress me with them. I should see your face at Welwyn with more joy, if you ran my inability to return them less in debt. All that is in my little power, is at your service; that power always little, but now less. The misfortune I mentioned to you in my last letter hangs heavy on me; books, my wonted refuge, are of no further use, and

'Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.'

But this is a melancholy subject both to you and me. Pardon, therefore, this short letter, nor measure my regard by it."<sup>1</sup>

This year, however, saw the publication of his final poem, *Resignation*, although it had been written nearly twelve months earlier. The occasion of its composition was narrated by Mrs. Montagu. On the death of Admiral Boscawen, his "once happy wife" found some consolation for her loss in the perusal of the *Night Thoughts*, and Mrs. Montagu, on learning that fact, introduced her to the author, who, in addition to fortifying Mrs. Boscawen by his conversation, promised to continue his ministry in verse. He kept his word, though "conscious of nature in decline" and "languor" in his thoughts. At first he had no intention of publishing the poem, but as several extracts from manuscript copies had been printed, he decided to correct the whole for the press. By one critic *Resignation* was described as "the last but worst"

<sup>1</sup> B.M. Add. MS. 30992, f. 8.

of his poems, whereas Dr. Johnson declared "there is Young in every stanza, such as he often was in the highest vigour." It was while the poet was engaged on this swan-song that he was stricken with the news of Richardson's death.

Doubtless it was the publication of *Resignation* which prompted Keate to suggest another theme for the poet's pen, but Young, as he explained in his note of the 4th of January, 1763, felt unequal to any further composition.

"As for the task you assign me, the feebleness of my sight has given me an utter aversion to a pen and ink; and probably it is very lucky that it has done so, for there is some reason to fear that I have not so many spirits to spare on any undertaking as I had some years ago; but on this head I shall speak further, when I have the pleasure of seeing you here, which, perhaps, may give me those spirits which are now wanting."<sup>1</sup>

Keate had prepared a new poem for publication this year *The Alps*, which he purposed dedicating to his aged friend. At first, however, he sent him a proof of the piece, and it was not until he had received Young's commendation of it in that form that he disclosed the intention he had in view. The poet's acceptance of the dedication was written on the 14th of April.

"As for the inscription, I am too vain to make any objections to it; but not so very vain, as not to thank you for it.

"As to my health, I bless God I am pretty well, but suspect myself to be a little older than I was. I wish age and wisdom were inseparable; but if they were, one ounce of wisdom in youth, in the balance of the sanctuary, outweighs a pound in grey hairs. I congratulate you therefore on having much the advantage of, dear Sir, your very, etc."<sup>2</sup>

Early in the following month Young was writing to Keate

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992, f. 9.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992, f. 11.



again, and giving a proof that he retained a vivid memory of his friends of earlier years.

“ I am glad you sent one of your poems to Mrs. Montagu ; I am glad of it for her sake, and your own ; for her sake because she knows how to relish your favour, and for your own because it will give a beginning to an acquaintance which will give you no small pleasure, and perhaps some surprise, at finding a bright power in another sex, but rarely to be found in your own.

“ As to my health, it is not so good as I could wish, but better than I ought to expect ; it is so good, as to demand my utmost thanks to God that 'tis no worse ; but not so good as not to want a cordial under it, and I know of none more powerful than that which refreshes us from the face of a friend.”<sup>1</sup>

By this date, the early summer of 1763, his sight had so far failed him that Mrs. Hallows had become his constant amanuensis, and she and his curate, Mr. Jones, took it in turn to read him the news of the day or favourite passages from his best-loved books. On a June day one of the newspaper items which interested him deeply was the announcement of the marriage of Lady Henrietta Bentinck to Lord Grey, which naturally prompted him to offer his congratulations to the Duchess of Portland.

“ In yesterday's newspaper I read an article with infinite satisfaction ; I beg leave to give your Grace joy on that happy occasion. May you, Madam, and Lady Harriet, I should say, Grey—to whom my humble duty—find your fullest satisfaction in it. Parents deserve our congratulation on nothing so much as on their final and happy disposal of those whom they love, and who deserve their love, as well as Lady Grey. The accomplishment of this important point takes a great load from the tender maternal heart, and promises serene days to the remainder of life.

“ I hope your Grace is entirely free from the painful

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992, f. 11.

indisposition of which you complained in your last ; that letter I answered long since, with my fullest acknowledgments to my Lord Bute for his unmerited indulgence to me. But that indulgence I am conscious must be owing to your Grace's favour, to whom, therefore, on that occasion my principal and most sincere acknowledgments and thanks are due.

“ Once more I give your Grace joy of so happy a conclusion in an affair which must have had a just title to your most tender concern ; and that it may yearly present you with new occasions of joy, till your joy receives its full completion where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage, is the prayer of your most dutiful servant.”<sup>1</sup>

According to his letters to Dr. Birch, Mr. Jones had a year previously decided to resign his curacy at Welwyn owing to the “ duty and confinement ” being “ too much ” for him. He was still at his post, however, and beginning to retail parish gossip to his rector's detriment. “ There is much mystery in almost all his temporal affairs,” he reported, “ as well as in many of his speculative opinions. Whoever lives in this neighbourhood to see his exit, will probably see and hear of some very strange things.” Mr. Jones was trying all the time to secure another curacy, but as he failed he agreed to remain at Welwyn, not for the “ lucrative motives ” which had been created by the more than doubling of his salary, but because of the “ compassion and humanity ” which dwelt in his disinterested breast. Neither the increased salary, however, nor his own “ compassion and humanity ” stayed Mr. Jones' pen from retailing more parish gossip, though he did qualify it so far as to admit that his “ ancient Gentleman ” was more “ harmless ” than someone else in his household. It was that someone else, namely, Mrs. Hallows, who, he now said, had been a factor in his contemplated resignation. As Mr. Jones was to be a witness of the poet's exit, and as he did not record any “ very strange things ” as happening on that event, his subsequent gossip may be disregarded.

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 327-8.

A more pleasant ending to the year 1763 is provided by a letter addressed to Professor Ebbert of Brunswick, for the understanding of which it is necessary to premise that the Countess of Stolberg was a great admirer of the *Night Thoughts*, and had requested the author to be godfather to her child. Young had already agreed to that request; his letter of the 29th of December was an additional salutation to the countess as well as a kindly greeting to Dr. Ebbert.

“ Dear Sir,—Pray give my very best respects to the Countess of Stolberg, and let her know that with the greatest sincerity and joy of heart, I congratulate her on the happiness and virtues of those she holds most dear; and that I shall implore the Divine mercy for the continuance of all blessings on them and her. Further let her know that I request in return her prayers; hoping that though our fortune has appointed us to be strangers in this world, yet that we may be intimate in that happy country where there is no such thing as brittle friendships, and they that love will both love and be loved for ever!

“ I have not yet received the third volume of your work. The late Earl of Granville, a person of the very highest distinction, who understood your language, desired me to lend him your two former volumes, which he read with the highest approbation and applause.

“ I thank you, dear Sir, for your kind wishes, but my great age and ill-health disable me from being so large in my respects to you as I ought and wish to be. That God may increase your happiness, and succeed your learned and pious labours, is the hearty prayer of, dear Sir, Your obliged and obedient Servant,

“ E. YOUNG.”<sup>1</sup>

For the early months of 1764 there are several letters which, notwithstanding their naturally pensive tone, reveal something of the old sprightly spirit. The earliest of these, written on the 12th of February, was addressed to Keate in acknowledgment of a present the nature of which is a mystery. The

<sup>1</sup> *Bod. MS. Montagu d. 18, f. 170.*

allusion to the Wilkes commotion shows that the veteran poet was still taking an interest in the news of the day.

“ It is very kind in you to enquire after my welfare, and it is quite as natural as it is kind. One great man has told us that all is vanity and vexation, and another that it is all labour and sorrow when we come to fourscore. Now when these two last enemies reinforce the former, which is the common lot, there is no small cause to doubt whether all is well. But all is well that Nature appoints; and I shall think it to be so, and shall rejoice under it when I see you at Welwyn.

“ I received your present. You seem to make me a King by your annual tribute. For two or three months I shall lay it up in my Exchequer, of which I shall make my cat Chancellor, otherwise the rats will rebel and show that I have a very limited monarchy over them. They are of Wilkes' party, and I wish they were as far off; but I must submit to my fate; for why should Edward's reign be less disturbed than George's? And why should rats be more loyal than men?

“ And now what is this kind of writing. It may be called the smile of the pen; to let you know that its master can fight age and infirmity, and endeavour with Anacreon

‘ Of little life the most to make,  
And manage wisely the last stake.’

Heaven aid us to be pleased with all things, for on no other terms will heaven be pleased with us.”<sup>1</sup>

In March Young had the joy of learning that he might expect another visitor in addition to Keate, for his letter to the Duchess of Portland dated the 13th of that month shows that her Grace had promised to call upon her old Bulstrode guest.

“ If gratitude is any virtue, I have great reason to be truly concerned upon your Grace's indisposition; may a good

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992 f. 14.

Providence soon remove it, and restore you to perfect health and a true relish of it, which nothing can give us so effectually as a little taste of the contrary. Please to accept my humble thanks for the great honour you design me ; I have long wished for it, for few pleasures are equal to seeing the face of those whom we know to wish us well. The dancing duchess would scarce have so much pleasure in a well performed minuet ; or the busy duke in his political country-dance from the angry cabals of town to the learned banks of Cam. How vain the business or amusements of life to those great things which infirmities or age will naturally, if not necessarily, bring to our thoughts ! I bless God I am pretty well, and for me to hope for more would be folly ; for miracles are ceased.

“ Not being able through the weakness of my sight to wait on Lord Bute, a pretty while ago I wrote to him, and received a most obliging letter in answer, for which I thank him and your Grace ; but I do not thank him for raising the price of our provisions by his great hospitality. We are all very welcome if we please to indulge at his plentiful table, but a chicken will cost us very dear if we eat it at our own. He nobly entertains the rich, charitably relieves the poor, and reads, I hope with Christian patience, in the papers the great thanks which the public returns for those virtues.

“ I give your Grace joy of being no politician, for whoever turns his head that way at this time might as good as put it in the pillory, for he will be sure to have dirt thrown at him by some hand or another, though they stoop for it into the kennel of nonsense and ill will ; yet some ears are so nailed to politics that they are deaf to everything else.

“ Madam, your Grace has many that share your good wishes ; I hope they are all well ? And may they all contribute to your happiness, till your happiness, which must necessarily have its root in earth, shall arrive in its full bloom above.

“ Your Grace says that you shall never forget that you are on the verge of fifty ; if you should live two fifties more, after all your experience, this would be your last thought : what very, very trifles all the world so passionately pursues !

how great the prize it so carelessly neglects! how inconceivable must be that bliss which cost the blood of God! These things force themselves on the thoughts of age, but how much happier are they in the day of enjoyment and strength of life, when the very thought is virtue, since we must then fight our way through temptations to the contrary to come at it! How very different the value of these thoughts in the fine walks of Bulstrode, and in the melancholy chamber of languor or pain! These politics are a noble science, and too little studied by country and court; few Secretaries of State are made by them. Your Grace will pardon me for repeating to you your own words.”<sup>1</sup>

Apparently Keate's visit to Welwyn was postponed by the claims of authorship. He was preparing for the press a poem on *Netley Abbey*, which he had had lying by him for some time. Delay in publication, Young assured him, might be beneficial; “for by that means,” he added, “the fondness of a parent hardens into the impartiality of a judge, which is more a friend to the maturity of composition.” As the poem was now in proof, however, he expressed a wish to see a copy, and seems to have suggested several alterations. That these were not adopted made no difference to Young's desire to see the author at Welwyn, for he renewed his invitation in April on receiving the printed poem.

“I wish I could send to you as much pleasure by the post as you sent me by the carrier. I take for granted that the hints I gave you were wrong; however I should be glad to dispute with you on that point, or on any other provided Welwyn be the field of battle; the custom of which place is that the vanquished shall divide the smile with the conqueror, and by that means, though demolished, to shine, like your *Netley Abbey*, in ruins.”<sup>2</sup>

At the end of July Keate paid his promised visit, glad, no

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 328-9.

<sup>2</sup> *B.M. Add. MS.* 30992, f. 17.

doubt, according to Miss Burney's account of his character, to have so excellent an opportunity of indulging his weakness for talking about his own works. A few days after he had left, on the 7th of August, Young reported the visit to the Duchess of Portland. The Dr. Monsey who had also favoured the poet with a call was that Chelsea Hospital physician who was the Earl of Bath's rival for the affections of Mrs. Montagu. As he was a notorious free-thinker, his appearance at Welwyn must have shocked the "worthy Mr. Jones."

"I greatly rejoice that you have recovered what is most valuable in life, health and spirits, and that you have recovered them by the most pleasant as well as the most effectual means; that is, by driving away from your physician as fast and as far as you can; which is the most likely way of leaving your disorder too behind you. As for my own health, which your Grace is so good as to ask after, I bless Heaven that I suffer no severe pains, but I have little appetite by day, and very indifferent rest by night, and my eyes grow worse and worse; but Almighty God's blessed will be done.

"I have not for a long time either seem Mrs. Montagu or heard from her; but I have heard often of her. Dr. Monsey called on me a little while ago, and told me he was to wait on her, but could not be admitted, because my Lord Bath was dead; and this last week, one Mr. Keate, of the Temple, an author both in prose and verse, favoured me with a visit for two or three days, and told me that some little time ago he had the honour of dining with Mrs. Montagu with about ten more, all or most of them writers; that the entertainment was very elegant, and that a celebrated Welsh harp added music to their wit.

"They are wise who make this life as happy as they can, since at the very happiest it will fall short of their desires, which, blessed be God, are too large to be quite pleased with any thing below; and whilst by their largeness they give us some little disgust to this life, they make rich amends for that disadvantage by giving us at the same time as strong assurance of a better."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 329.

What the "worthy Mr. Jones" meant when he arched his eyebrows at his rector's "speculative opinions" is a mystery; if, however, he could have read that rector's letter of the 7th of October to Keate he would have seen that the suspected heretic had not given up a particle of his faith in the Christian revelation. Publisher Dodsley had died on the 23rd of the previous month.

"On opening your letter, I was pleased to find that I had still one friend on this side the grave. Of late I have lost so very many that I begun to doubt it. Poor Dodsley! But why poor? Let us give him joy of his escape.

'None would live past years again,  
Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain;  
And from the dregs of life hope to receive  
What the first sprightly runnings could not give.  
I'm tired with waiting for this chemic gold,  
Which fools us young and beggars us when old.'

"When Mrs. Gateker told me that — had his doubts as to Christianity, an argument for it occurred to me, which is not to be found, I think, in writers on that subject. As it is but short, and to me most convincing, I will tell you what it is: first, such is the nature of Christianity that the plan of it could not possibly have entered into the mind of man; secondly, if it had entered it could not possibly have been received by mankind, without a supernatural interposition in its favour.

"As for Voltaire, I have not seen what you mention, but as long as there is fear and pity in the heart of man, reading a page in Shakespeare will be a sufficient reply to what Voltaire can urge against him. I heartily wish you had an affecting tale under your hand; it would give you great pleasure in the composition, and your friends in the perusal. Thus you see, self-interest, as usual, is at the bottom of our civilities. Success attend you in all your undertakings, and fortitude man you against all the deficiencies of human life."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 30992 f. 18.



That was Young's last letter and his farewell and benediction to his latest friend. But it was not the final missive from Welwyn. To the many new years he had seen was added yet another, 1765, which was scarce seven weeks old ere, on the 19th of February, he indicted one more message to the widowed mistress of Bulstrode.

“ It is so long since I had the honour of writing to you that you may possibly look on this as a letter from the dead, but I am still above ground, though I can hardly venture to say that I am quite alive ; the severe weather on Sunday night almost destroyed me. My being so long silent was not occasioned by disrespect, for I bear to your Grace the greatest respect ; nor was it occasioned by want of power, for, I bless God, I am pretty well ; nor was it occasioned by want of inclination, for I desire nothing more than to hear of your Grace's welfare. Whatever, therefore, was the cause of it, I beg your Grace to permit me now to enquire after your health and the health of all those who have the happiness of being related to or of being esteemed by you. In the last letter which I had the honour of receiving from your Grace, you was about to make a round of visits to several entitled to one or to both of the characters above. I hope you found and left them well, and brought home at your return an increase of health and satisfaction. Air and exercise are not greater friends to the former than the cheerful smiles of those we love are to the latter ; and when is it more necessary to provide for our private satisfaction and peace than at a time when that of the public seems to be in some hazard of being impaired, if not lost ? But what have I to do with the public affairs of this world ? They are almost as foreign to me as to those who were born before the Flood. My world is dead ; to the present world I am quite a stranger, so very much a stranger that I know but one person in it, and that is your Grace.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bath MSS.* i, 329-30.

One other glimpse of Young, and such a glimpse as would have reassured the "worthy Mr. Jones," is vouchsafed us in a letter of Cowper, in which the Olney poet narrated an anecdote told him by Nathaniel Cotton, that poetic physician who had taken charge of him during his insanity. The book referred to was Thomas Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*.

"Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with Dr. Young, paid him a visit about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health; the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him, in the doctor's eye, the appearance of a prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when Young closed the conference thus: 'My friend, there are two considerations upon which my faith in Christ is built as upon a rock: the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the resurrection of man, the three cardinal articles of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never have invented; therefore they must be divine. The other argument is this: If the Prophecies have been fulfilled (of which there is abundant demonstration) the Scripture must be the word of God; and if the Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must be true.'"<sup>1</sup>

Death was not far distant when the poet indicted his farewell to the Duchess of Portland. Ere February was spent his old pains returned with renewed force; on the first day of April he took to his bed for the last time, and thenceforward his two doctors were obliged to administer frequent opiates to relieve his sufferings.

As soon as the dangerous nature of Young's illness became apparent, Mrs. Hallows sent for his son Frederick, who, for some undefined offence, had been denied his father's house for several years. Whatever his misconduct may have been, it is clear from Croft's naive admission that it was more serious

<sup>1</sup> Southey, *Life and Works of William Cowper*, iii, 250.



YOUNG MEMORIAL STONE, WELWYN RECTORY GROUNDS



than Dr. Johnson's version to the effect that the son had reprimanded his father for resigning himself to the authority of Mrs. Hallows. Although Croft was concerned to defend the character of his convivial companion, and denied that the poet's son had been ejected from his college, he confessed that his friend had been guilty of "follies" which though "blameable in a boy" had been repented by the man.

But to date back this estrangement between father and son to the death of Lady Young, as some writers have done, is absurd and false. It has been seen that Young made a special journey to Winchester in Frederick's interests in 1750, nine years subsequent to his wife's death, and that so late as 1758 he attempted to secure for that son a living in the gift of the Duke of Portland. So the variance must have been after 1758. Moreover, although Frederick was given to understand that he would not be welcome at Welwyn, his father's will is conclusive proof that he had no intention of disinheriting him. It is idle to speculate on the nature of Frederick's transgression; but the character of the poet as it has been revealed in the preceding pages is sufficient to convince the unprejudiced that it must have been of a kind to have merited its punishment.

When once more under his father's roof, with the shadow of death hovering near, remorse would naturally prompt the son to wish to see his parent and hear his forgiveness from his own lips; and Young has been severely blamed for not granting that request. But in his defence it must be remembered that he was an aged man, in his eighty-second year; that he was practically blind; that he was suffering great pain; that he was frequently under opiates; and that he may well, under such circumstances, have dreaded what must have been a painful interview. Besides, he did not withhold his forgiveness. When informed of his son's plea, he said, "I heartily forgive him," and then, raising his feeble hand, he added: "God bless him!"

That priestly benediction is our last message from Young's death-bed. He retained his senses to the last, passing peacefully away on Good Friday night, the 5th of April. And

nowhere did the sorrowful news cause more sincere mourning than amid the ducal splendours of Bulstrode. "I am afraid," wrote Mrs. Delany, "the death of Dr. Young touched the Duchess of Portland. Her tenderness for her friends is unalterable." And with good reason in this instance: for no visitor to Bulstrode or contributor to her correspondence had paid her more courtly compliments, or sympathised more sincerely in her joys and sorrows, or amused her with brighter wit or counselled her with riper wisdom than Edward Young.

Let it be remembered, too, to his honour, that in an age of literary feuds he quarrelled with no friend; that he envied no fellow-writer but generously assisted all who appealed for his help; that he was liberal to the twin causes of religion and charity; and that he was eminently faithful in the discharge of his priestly duties.

A few scattered traditions aid us in realising the manner of man he was. As a midnight worker with his pen, he is said to have polished his lines with unwearied care; as a student of books, Boswell credits him with marking his favourite passages by doubling and redoubling the pages that pleased him; as a brilliant talker, he was more than a match for the witty Voltaire; as a lover of his garden, he, mindful of another Eden, inscribed an alcove with the legend *Ambulantes in horto audierunt docem Dei*. That he was an absent man all his friends knew, especially Richardson, who once had to complain that he had so far forgotten his existence as to have been three weeks in London without going near him until he had taken horseback for his return journey. But that trait of his character probably had its root in that other quality which caused him to adorn his garden with a painted bench, a mere optical deceit, on which were written the words *Invisibilia non decipiunt*.

For in the later years of his life Young had learnt of a truth that "the things unseen do not deceive us." His anchor was fixed within the veil. If neither in his sermons or verse or letters he displayed that familiarity with Scripture which was the mark of the Puritan, if he was deficient in that

reverence for the sacraments which distinguished the Laudian, if he knew nothing of that fervour which characterised the Revivalist, he was none the less a true son of the household of faith and a champion of righteousness.

Doubtless it is true that a newer theology has given an old-fashioned flavour to the eschatology of the *Night Thoughts*, but its ministry of exhortation and consolation to many generations is one of the great heritages of English verse. To this day, in those homes where the books of ancestors are treasured, there are few libraries which do not include a copy of that once deeply-pondered poem. It may be found in all sizes, from the stately folio with Blake's mystical designs, to the modest duodecimo with its Welwyn graveyard frontispiece. And to turn the yellowing pages of those old editions is to discover here a sere rose-leaf, there a wisp of silken thread, and elsewhere some other clue to passages which ministered to the spirits of bygone generations. Pencil and ink-marks in the margins point to lines and paragraphs which had pricked the conscience or soothed the griefs of the anxious and sorrowful of a forgotten day. Those memorials are Young's best title to fame; and to this later day they should preach his own moral that the greatest pleasure of old age is to look back on a life well spent.





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